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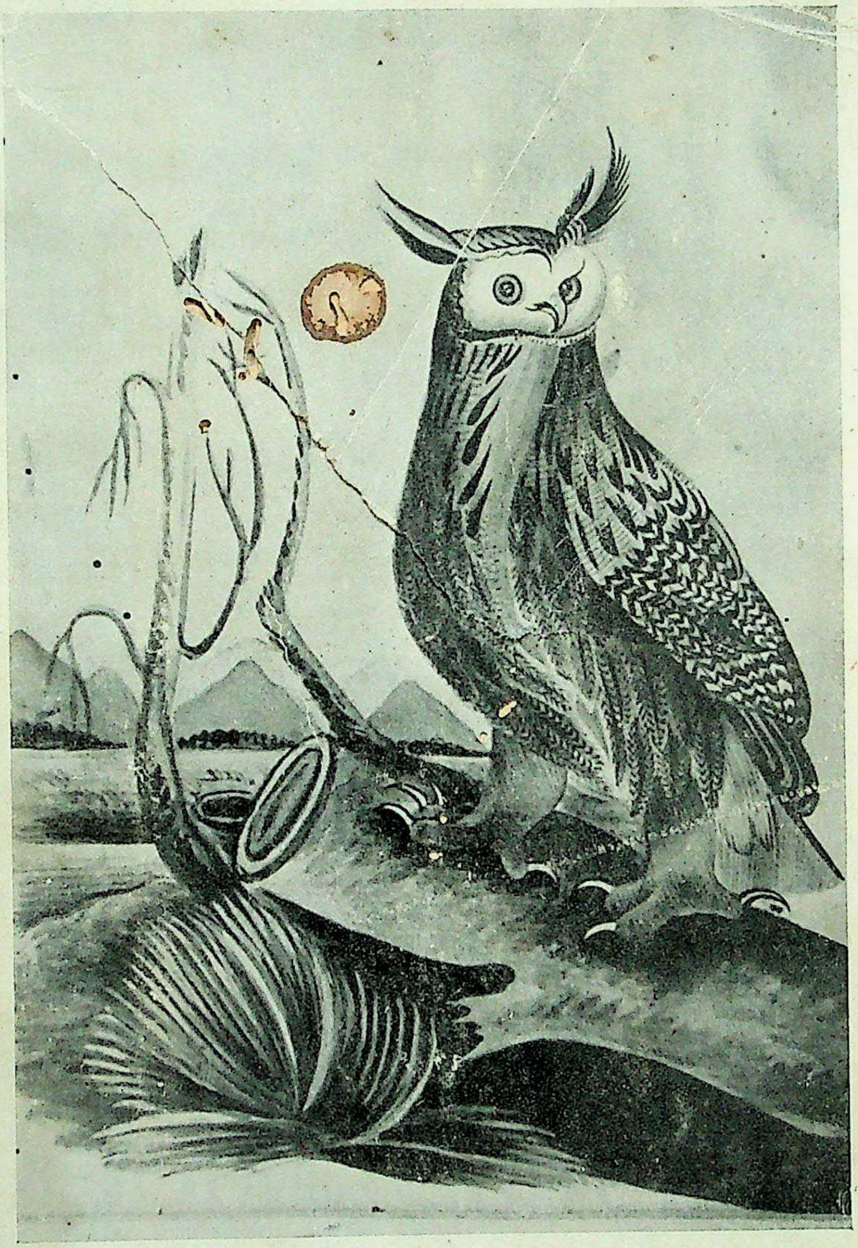
PATNA PAINTING



BY MILDRED ARCHER

48 Plates

PATNA PAINTING

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DAVID MARLOWE Ltd.
FOR
THE ROYAL INDIA SOCIETY
3 VICTORIA STREET, LONDON, S.W.1

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MADE IN GREAT BRITAIN

TO
P. C. MANUK
AND
MISS COLES

PREFACE

As a result of several decades of research the main outlines of Mughal painting in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are fairly solidly established. From the early eighteenth century onwards, however, the picture is less clear. With the collapse of the Mughal empire after Aurangzeb, the decentralisation of art was intensified and artists hurriedly left the central Court. This dispersal resulted in two types of painting. On the one hand, it gave a fresh impetus to painting in the Pahari Hindu Courts of Northern India, and on the other hand an Anglo-Indian style arose to which Rai Krishna Das has given the term "Company" or "Firangi" art. Concerning this latter art very little is so far known except that wherever there were Company settlements, as in Lahore, Mathura, Benares, Tanjore and Murshidabad, parallel types of painting grew up.

The Patna School of Painting is an example of this Company or Firangi art. Aesthetically it is not a major school, but its story fills a gap in Indian history and gives continuity to two centuries of painting. Its emergence followed the rise of the European trading and administrative community in Bengal, and its course reflects the changing disposition of power and wealth. It marks the fusion of Eastern and Western taste which occurred in the nineteenth century and mirrors the interests and artistic fashions of the period. The school is, in fact, a summary of the complicated interplay of European and Indian cultures in the nineteenth century.

The original discoverer of Patna paintings was Mr. P. C. Manuk, who, while investigating Mughal miniatures in Patna City in the early nineteen hundreds, lighted on examples of the work of Shiva Lal. His collection paved the way for all subsequent collections, and it is to his enlightened taste that we owe the preservation of the paintings. Moreover, his monograph on *The Patna School of Painting*, published in the Journal of the Bihar Research Society in September, 1943, summarised for the first time the essential history of the school.

In this book I have attempted to supplement the work of Mr. Manuk by analysing the attitudes and interests of Europeans and Indians in the early nineteenth century, and by enumerating the influences which fused to produce the Patna School. I have described in some detail the organisation of the painters and have added some new material. I have also as far as possible distinguished the various styles and have drawn attention to the work of an early master, Hulas Lal, who has hitherto escaped attention.

The chief and most important sources of my information are Professor Ishwari Prasad and B. Shyam Bihari Lal. Professor Ishwari Prasad, former Vice-Principal of the Calcutta School of Art, is a grandson of Shiva Lal, the foremost Patna painter, and it is largely through his memory of his grandfather and great-uncle and the stories repeated by them that the oral tradition has survived. Moreover, a number of existing paintings owe their preservation to his family collection, and much accurate attribution of particular paintings has proved possible through his precise recollections. B. Shyam Bihari Lal is the son of Bani Lal, another important painter, and the information passed to him by his family and the pictures in his possession have also done much to date Patna paintings and complete the history of the school.

Besides obtaining facts from these two sources, I received much help from Rai Sahib Balgovind Malaviya and Mr. Radha Mohan, the Principal of the Patna Art School, and himself a pupil of a Patna painter. Both gave me ungrudging access to their collections, while Rai Mathura Prasad of Patna City recorded for me the life-history of Mahadev Lal, his family artist. The descendants of Rai Sultan Bahadur, another landlord of Patna City and an enlightened patron of the school, also gave me information, while Mr. S. A. Shere, the Curator of the Patna Museum, was always ready at a moment's notice to produce pictures with indefatigable patience.

In addition, I must thank Rai Bahadur B. B. Mukherjee and Mrs. Amala Mukherjee for lavish assistance during my visits to Patna, and Rai Bahadur Sadashiva Prasad, who gave me untiring help in the course of my enquiries. To Mr. C. J. Creed, C.I.E., O.B.E., M.C., I am particularly indebted for his great courtesy in allowing Mr. P. K. Deva to photograph paintings for me and in placing the latter's trained services at my disposal. I must also thank Mr. H. G. Rawlinson, C.I.E., for valuable criticism and advice; Mr. Frederick Richter, O.B.E., for friendly co-operation in the stages of publication; Babu Uma Prasad Das, who assisted me with the typescript; and all those owners of paintings who have permitted me to reproduce pictures in their possession.

Above all, I must record my gratitude to Mr. P. C. Manuk and Miss Coles, with whose collection I have spent enthralling hours; and to my husband, Mr. W. G. Archer, with whom the quest for Patna paintings proved an adventure, exciting in its discoveries and vistas.

MILDRED ARCHER.

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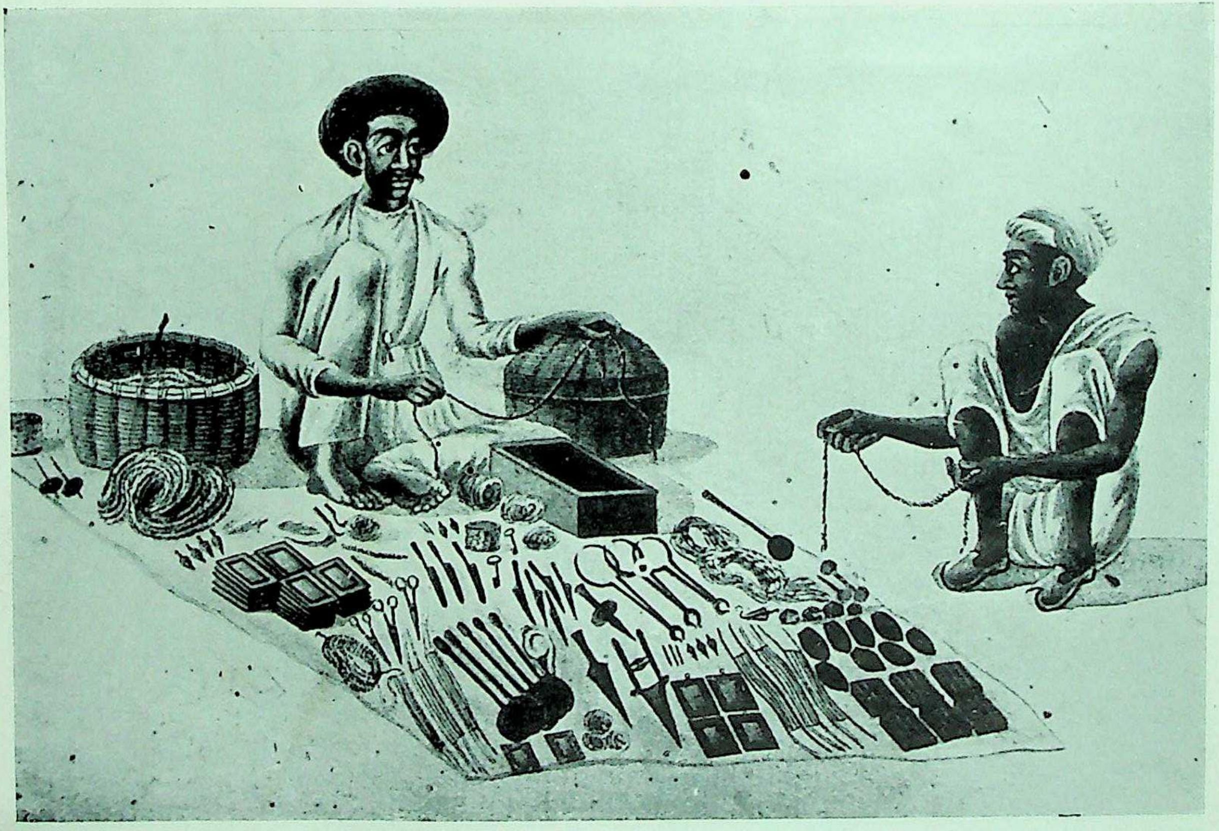

1. Sewak Ram (c.1770-c.1830). *The Pedlar*, c.1810.

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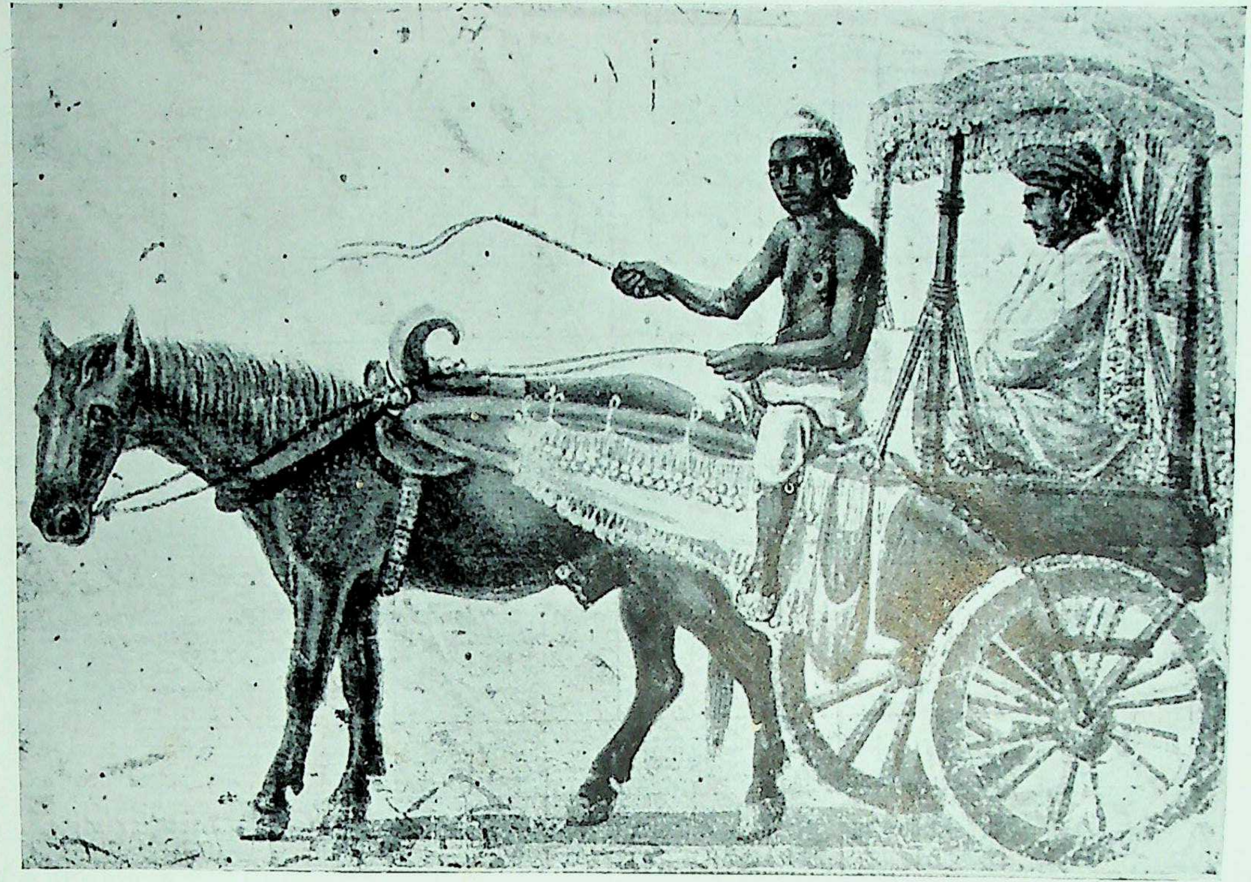

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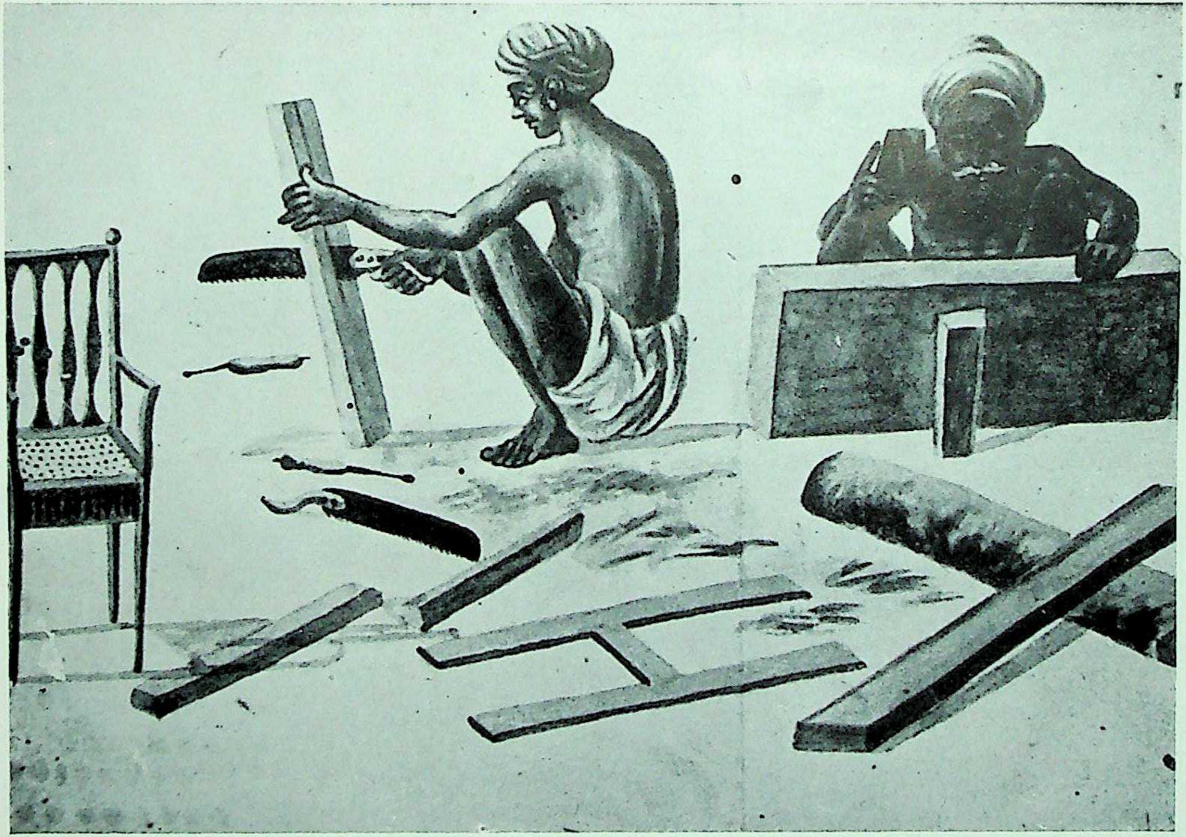

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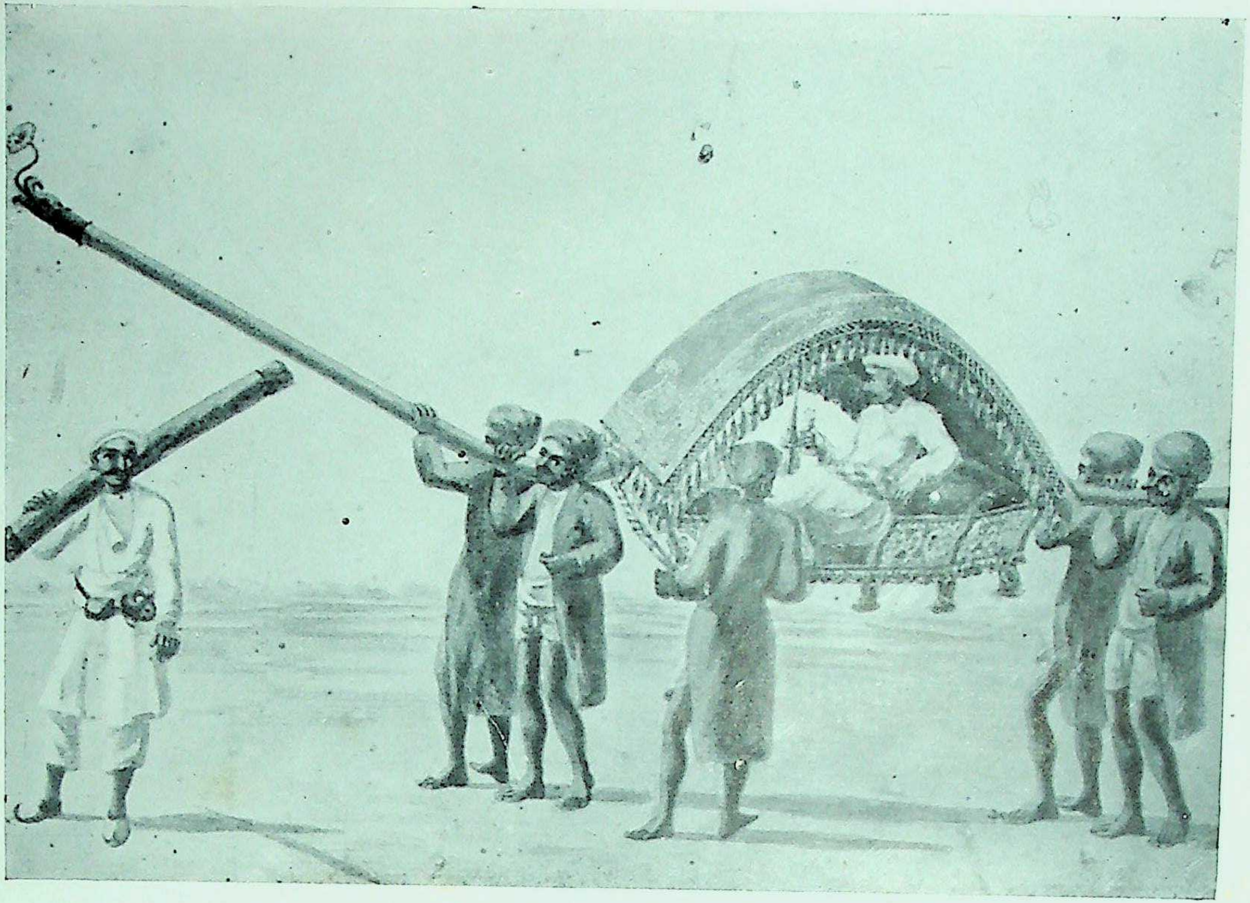

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CHAPTER I

THE ORIGINS OF THE PATNA SCHOOL

THE Patna *qalam* or school of painting flourished in Patna, the present capital of Bihar, from approximately 1760 to the early years of the twentieth century. Its origins are obscure, but according to Ishwari Prasad, the last painter of the school, his ancestors first lived in the Partabgarh district in Udaipur State, Rajputana. The family were Kayasths[1] who some time in the sixteenth century migrated to the Mughal court. We do not know the exact date of their migration, but it is not unlikely that it occurred about 1570, for it was then that Akbar[2] organised and subsidised the great studios in Fathepur Sikri which he later moved to Agra in 1585. To these studios he attracted artists from all over Northern India, and, unlike Humayun,[3] who had relied on imported Persian artists, he encouraged Hindu painters, especially those of the Kayasth caste. During the reigns of Akbar and Jahangir the early painters remained in obscurity, though two of them, Nohar and Manohar, attracted contemporary notice. Nohar is only a name, but if Manohar is identical with the famous Manohar, he was one of the greatest painters of the time.[4]

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[1] The clerical or writer caste. [2] 1556-1605. [3] 1530-1556.

[4] Percy Brown, *Indian Painting under the Mughals* (Oxford, 1924), p. 197 and Plate XXXI. Signed paintings by Manohar are in the British Museum *Baburnama*, in the Victoria and Albert *Akbarnama*, in the Wantage Collection, in the *Nizami Khamsah* belonging to Mr. C. W. Dyson Perrins, in the Bankipore *Timurnama*, in the Johnson Collection in the India Office and in the Rampur State Library MSS. He is one of the best known Hindu painters.

female portraits for Indian patrons were not portraits from the life, but " type " portraits of imaginary ladies in ideal postures. Little is known of the actual painters, but the name of one of them, Dhani Ram, has survived.

For about thirty years Murshidabad provided the ancestors of the Patna painters with an assured income and materials for their work, but about 1750 conditions again commenced to change, and between 1750 and 1760 some of the painters began to move once more. According to tradition, the main cause of this final migration was " the oppression " of Miran or Muhammad Sadi Khan. In 1757 Nawab Mir Jaffar succeeded to the Bengal Nizamat, and placed his son, Miran, in charge of the revenue collection of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. This Miran was an able but ruthless administrator, and his oppression, if it was in the form of heavy exactions, may well have sapped the painters' market by ruining their patrons. Then, when payments ceased to be regular and prices were no longer sure, the painters may have felt that Murshidabad was no longer secure enough to keep them. Miran's oppression, however, lasted only three years, for in 1760 he was killed by lightning.[1] If, therefore, his oppression was the only cause of the migration, there is no reason why the painters should not have returned to Murshidabad after his death. That they did not do so shows that Miran's oppression was only a contributing factor, and behind the move lay other and deeper causes.

The main factor which prompted the final migration was almost certainly the early decline of Murshidabad and the impoverishment of its rulers. Ali Vardi Khan[2] was the last of the great Nawabs. Even in his time the Marathas and Afghans reached the outskirts of

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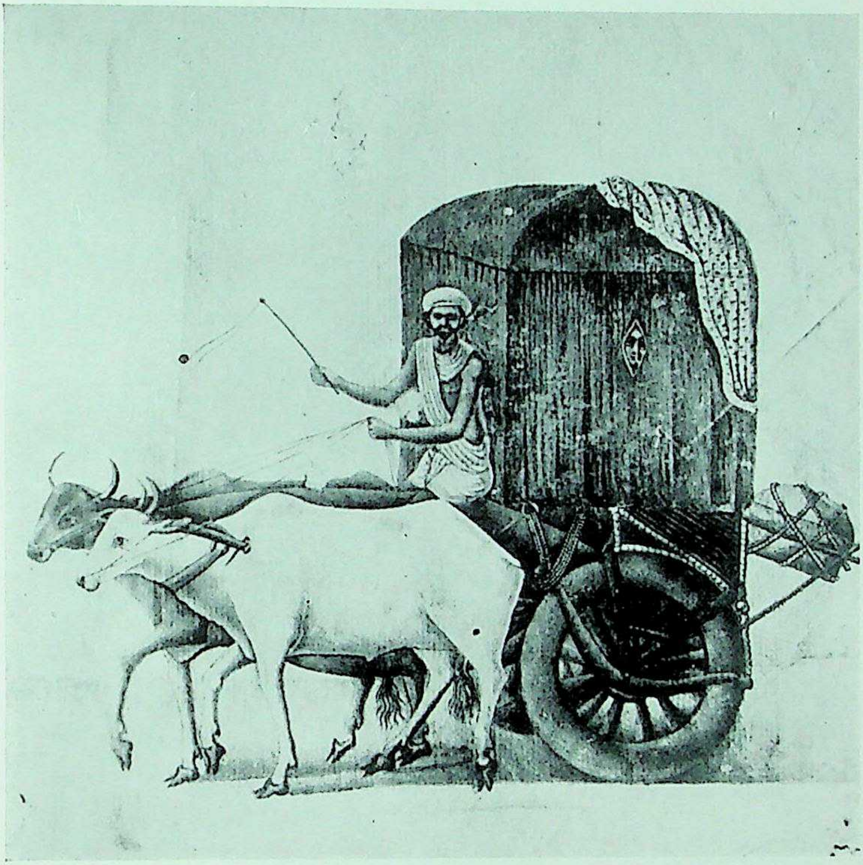
[1] J. H. Tull Walsh, *History of Murshidabad* (London, 1902), p. 151.

[2] 1740-1751.



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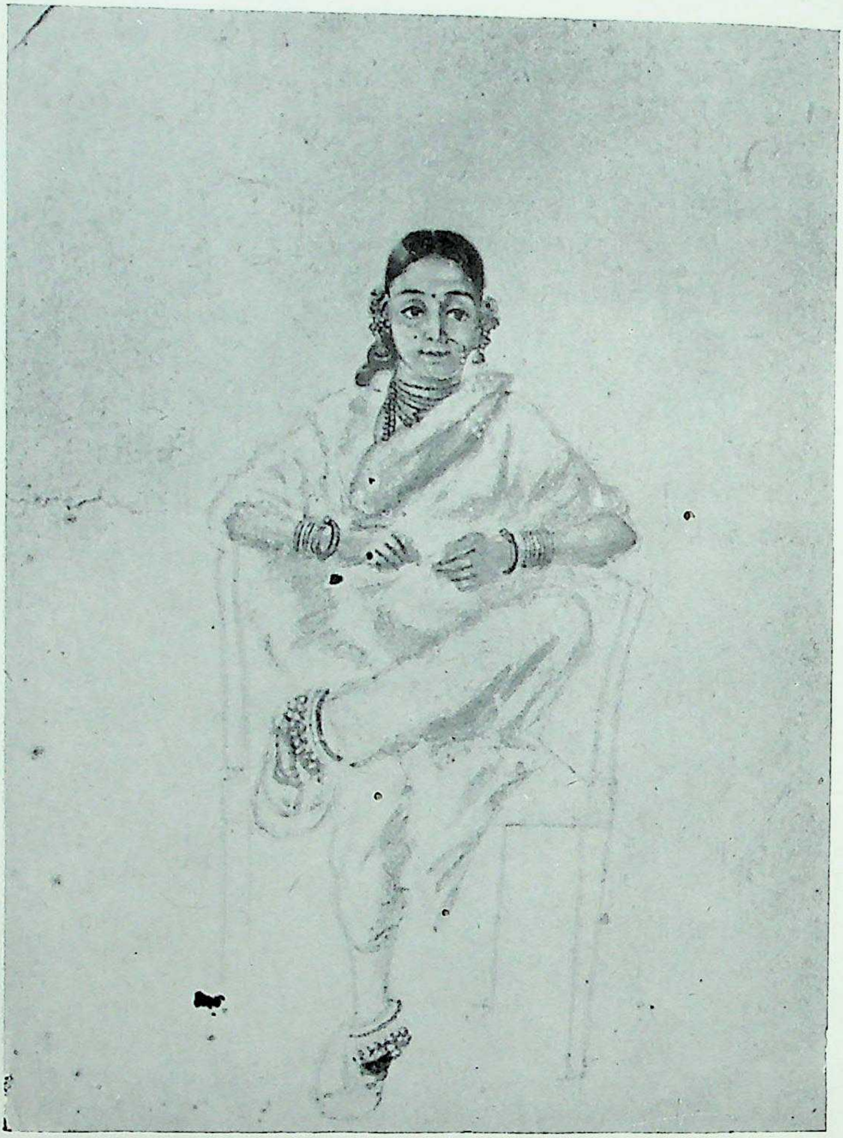

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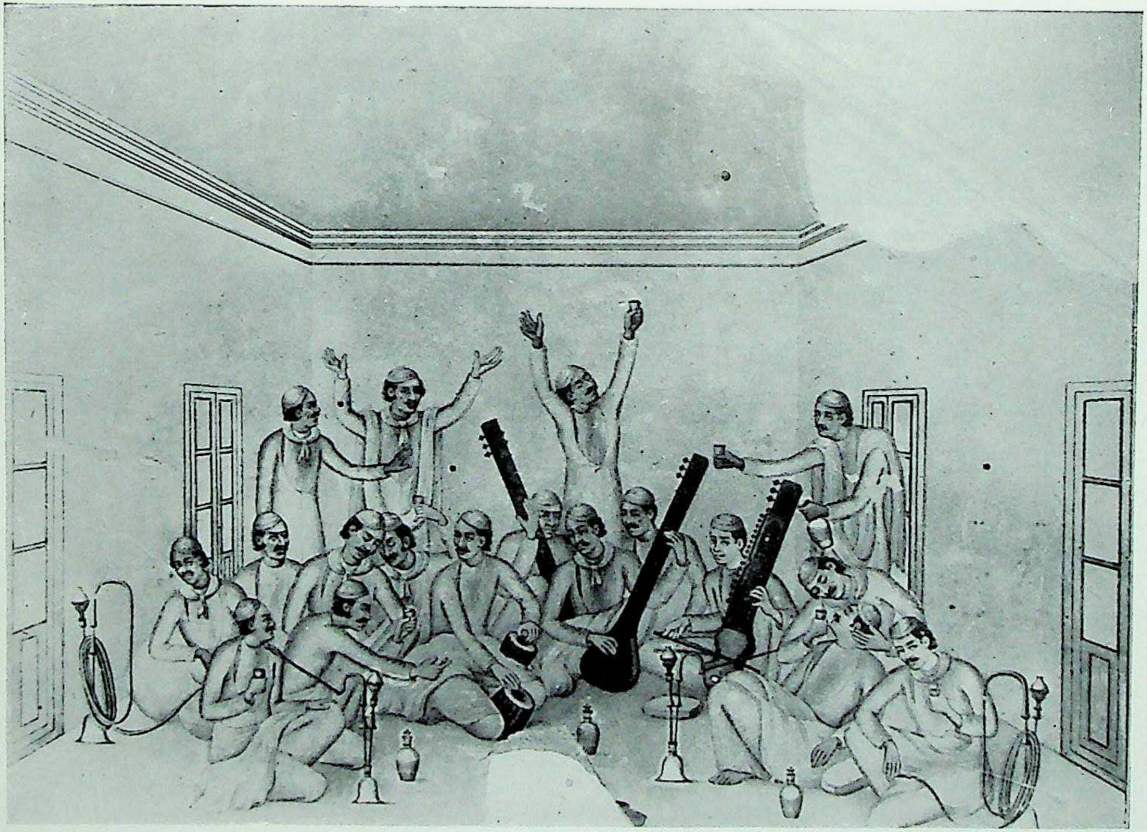

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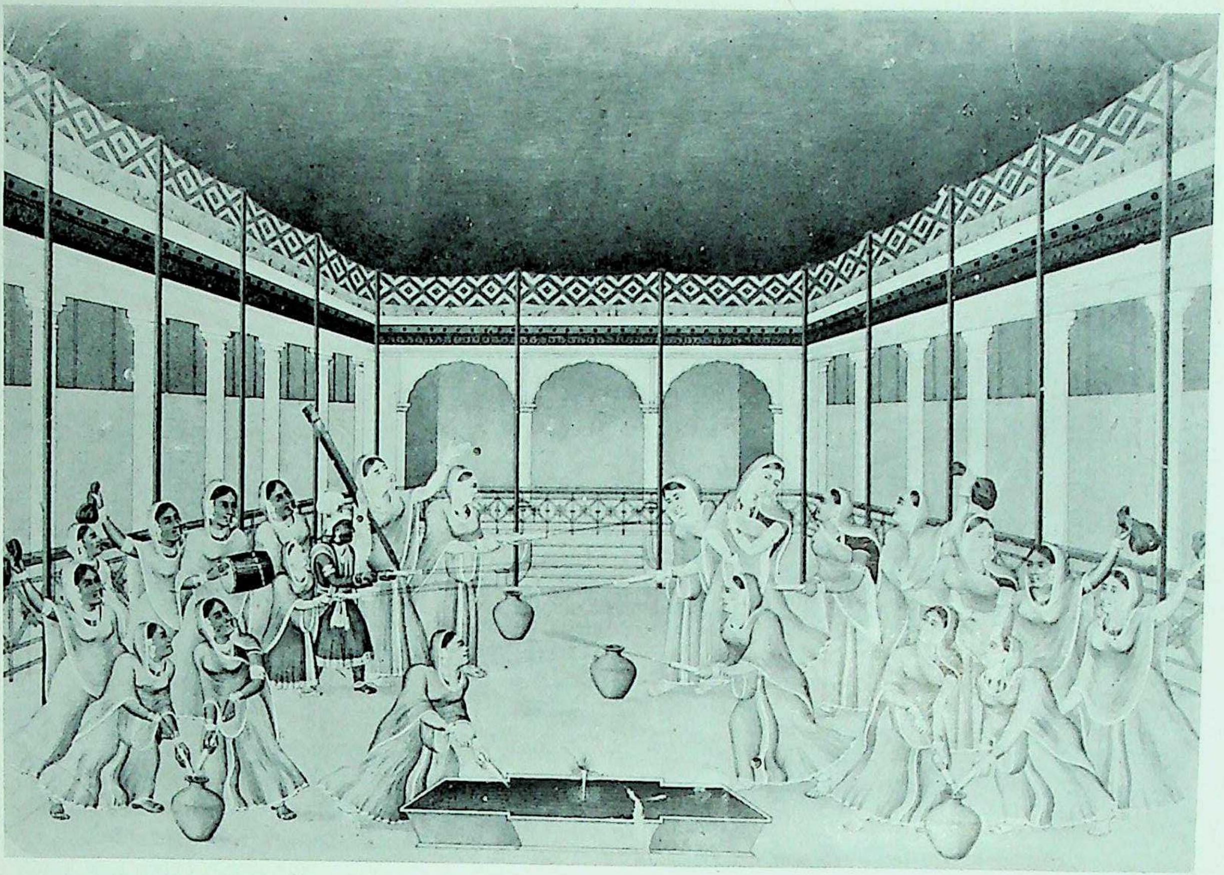

8. HULAS LAL (*c.*1785-1875). *Holi Scene*, *c.*1830.

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Murshidabad, plundered the suburbs and looted the boats passing down the Hooghli. Moreover, from his death onwards there was a continual struggle between the Nawabs and the Company, the latter steadily gaining in power. The collection of revenue became disorganised and the Nawab's income was drastically curtailed. Miran temporarily improved the administration, but it was not a lasting change, and in 1765 Clive took over the Diwanship or revenue administration. This administrative anarchy undoubtedly affected trade, and from 1750 onwards Murshidabad was a commercial centre drifting to decline.

Some time between 1750 and 1760, therefore, the painters again migrated, and this time to Patna. At first only a few members of the family set out, but when they found the centre profitable, others followed, and until the early years of the nineteenth century members of the family were drifting into Patna. We do not know why the first migrants chose this city, since between 1750 and 1793 Patna, like Murshidabad, was politically insecure and was involved in the same military operations between the Company and the Nawabs. But after Murshidabad and Calcutta it was the most important city in Eastern India, and it is not easy to see where else the painters could have gone. Situated on the Ganges, it had always been a commercial centre, and ever since the establishment of the British factory between 1650 and 1657 it had been exporting sugar, lac, cotton cloth, musk from Bhutan, saltpetre for gunpowder, and later indigo. It had not, however, developed a large European community at the time of the migration, and if there were Indian patrons their names have not been preserved. The migration was at first only a movement from one bazaar to another.

But the power of the Company was growing. That fact must have become increasingly clear as years went by, and in the last quarter of the eighteenth century Patna came to be the centre of the new administration. In 1770 a Council was appointed which gradually controlled the revenue administration. After 1781 Revenue Chiefs were appointed. In 1790 the administration of the criminal law was taken over, and in 1798 the district of Patna was established. The very administrative changes which were weakening Murshidabad were strengthening Patna. By 1800 it was the headquarters of one of the eleven divisions into which the vast territories of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal had been divided. The Commissioner of Patna was the superintendent of six large districts which constituted his division—Patna, Saran, Tirhut, Champaran, Shahabad and Gaya. Near by was Dinapore, the headquarters of one of the great military divisions of the Bengal army. The only European regiment between Calcutta and Cawnpore was stationed there. A number of mansions grew up along the Ganges, and by 1800 Patna had not only the Commissioner, the Collector, Magistrates and Judges, the Commandant of the Provincial Battalion, the Commercial Resident, the Opium Agent, but many European professionals, such as barristers and lawyers, chaplains and doctors. There were also adventurers, merchants, and planters, while a number of rich Indian landowners of large estate and ancient lineage were residing in the suburbs. It is from this time onwards that the Patna painters came into prominence, and we must now consider the circumstances which led to the expansion of the school.

CHAPTER II

THE PATNA MARKET

I

ON a first view a European settlement at the beginning of the nineteenth century could not have seemed a favourable environment for painters. Earlier in the previous century Indians and Europeans had met on terms of easy equality and had been mutually interested in each other's ways, but the rise of the East India Company changed the relationship to that of a ruling race and a subject people.[1] By 1800 most European settlements in India lived their own life, with their own shops, newspapers, concerts and entertainments. They aimed at being an exact replica of an English country town, and to most of their inhabitants Indian life was strange and unknown. A satire such as *Curry and Rice*,[2] though written later, gives a fair picture of the narrow pettiness of a European station.[3] Since Cornwallis had separated the two communities for administrative purposes, most Company servants lived aloof. Soldiers in particular were chiefly royal troops serving for a few years in India, with few roots in the country and with little interest in its people. The Europeans lived in a world of their own, and Tayler, who was Commissioner of Patna in 1857 and himself a man of great sympathy and culture, summed up the situation in a letter:

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[1] For the history of this racial estrangement, see Edward Thompson and G. T. Garett, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India* (London, 1934); and Edward Thompson, *The Making of the Indian Princes* (London, 1943).

[2] Capt. G. F. Atkinson, *Curry and Rice* (Calcutta, 1911), written about 1859.

[3] See also D. Kincaid, *British Social Life in India* (London, 1938)

"Separated as we necessarily are from the millions around by our habits and ideas, we are still further, and without the same necessity, isolated from their hearts by the utter absence of all individual feeling or sympathy. The great masses hear of functionary after functionary coming and going and holding the destinies of the people in the hollow of their hands, but they seldom, perhaps never, know what it is to feel that the minds of their rulers have ever been directed to understand or sympathise with the great heart around them. The result is an utter absence of those ties between the governors and the governed, that unbought loyalty which is the strength of kings and which, with all his faults, the Native of India is well capable of feeling."[1]

In spite, however, of this lack of social intercourse, many Europeans in India were interested in the Indian landscape and the Indian social scene. Moreover, as younger sons of the English aristocracy, many had a zest for country life and a passion for shooting, while a few retained as an adult interest a youthful training in drawing and painting. Few girls "finished" their education without learning to paint in water-colours, and many men regarded sketching as a normal function of their leisure. Emily Eden laughingly refers to "the sketching mania" of her friends. It is not surprising, therefore, that at the end of the eighteenth century and during the first half of the nineteenth a large number of sketches, water-colours and prints were produced by British amateur artists in India. Outstanding amongst them was Emily Eden herself.

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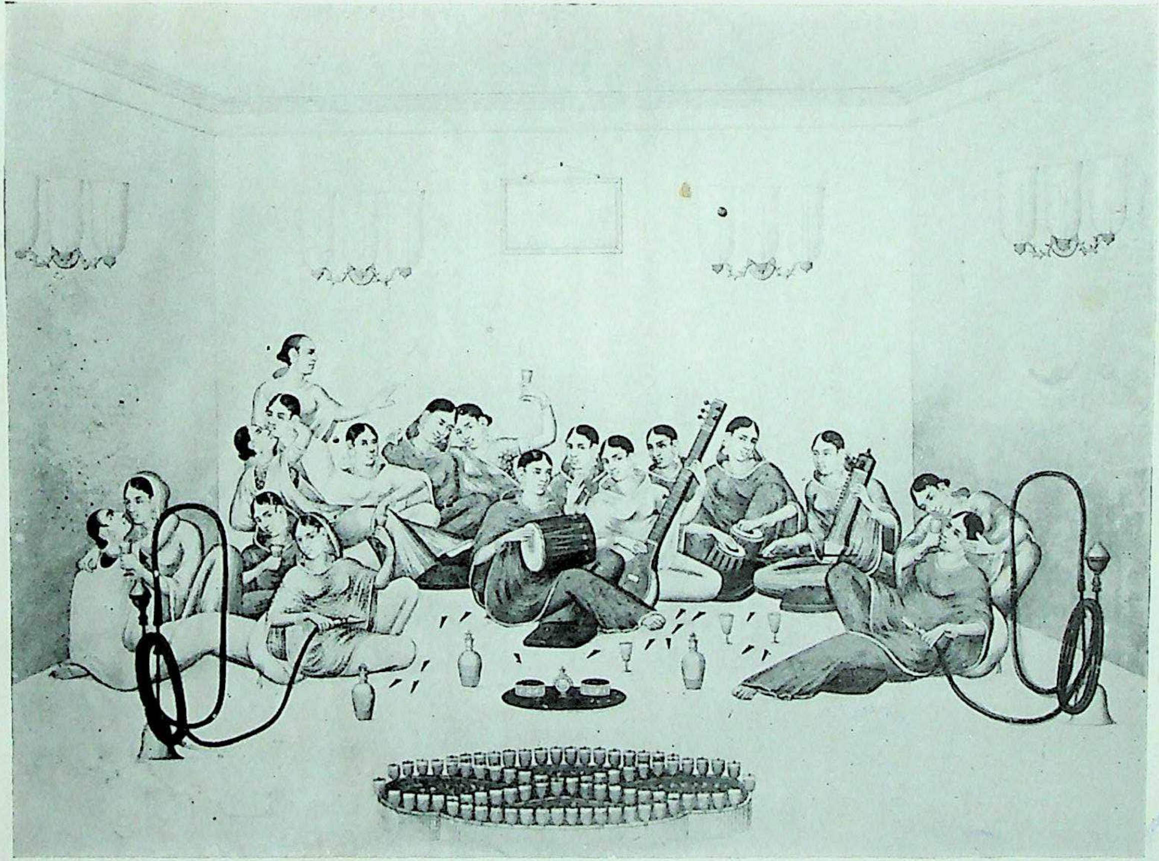
[1] J. W. Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War in India* (London, 1876), vol. iii., p. 69.



9. Hulas Lal (*c.*1785-1875). *Women Carousing*, *c.*1840.

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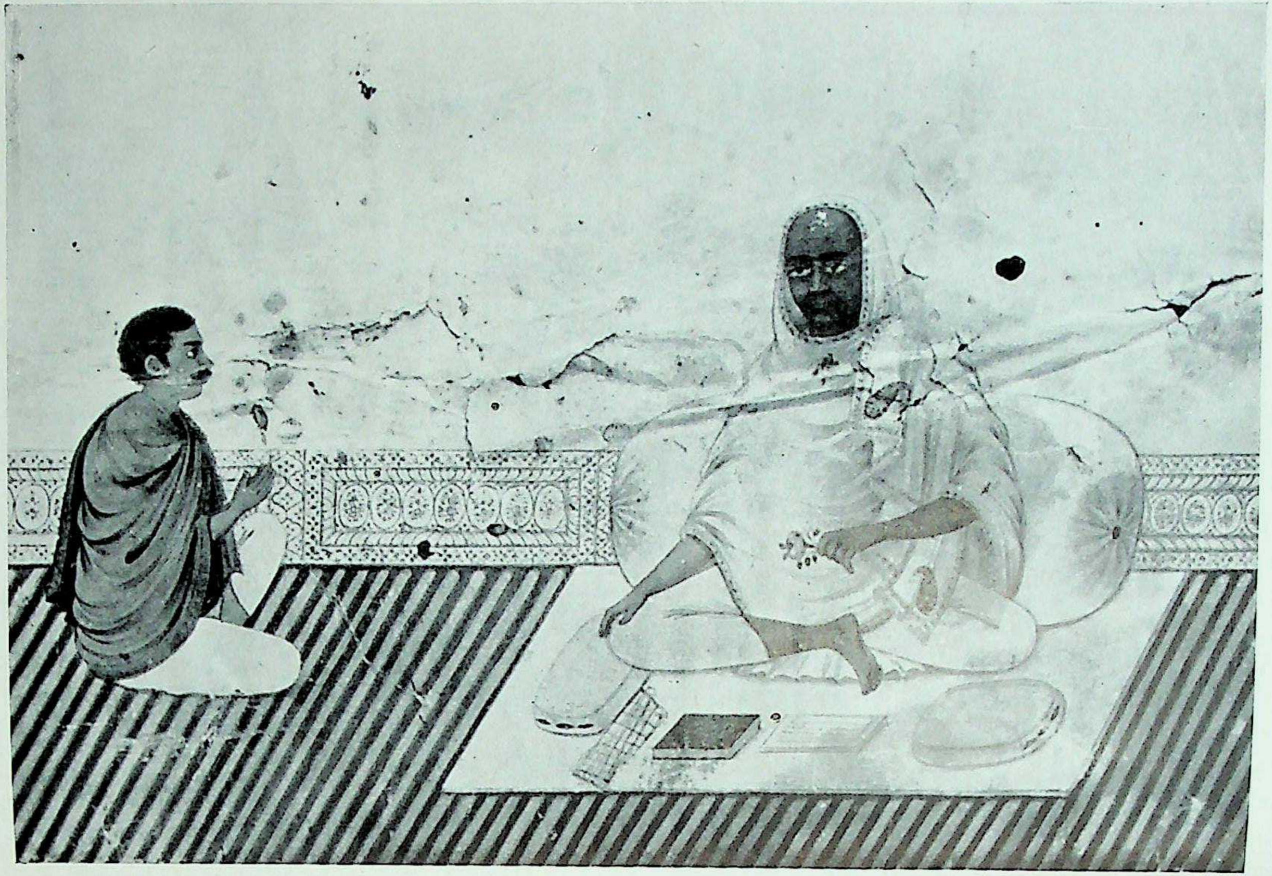
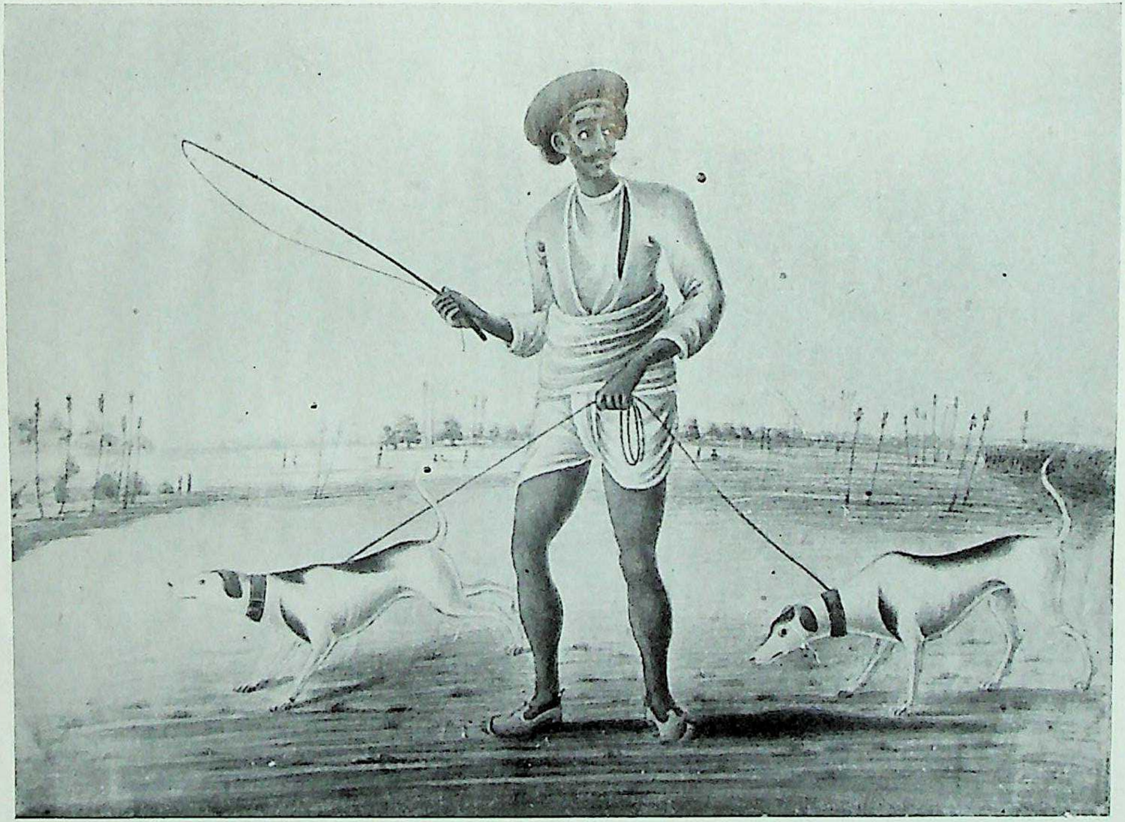
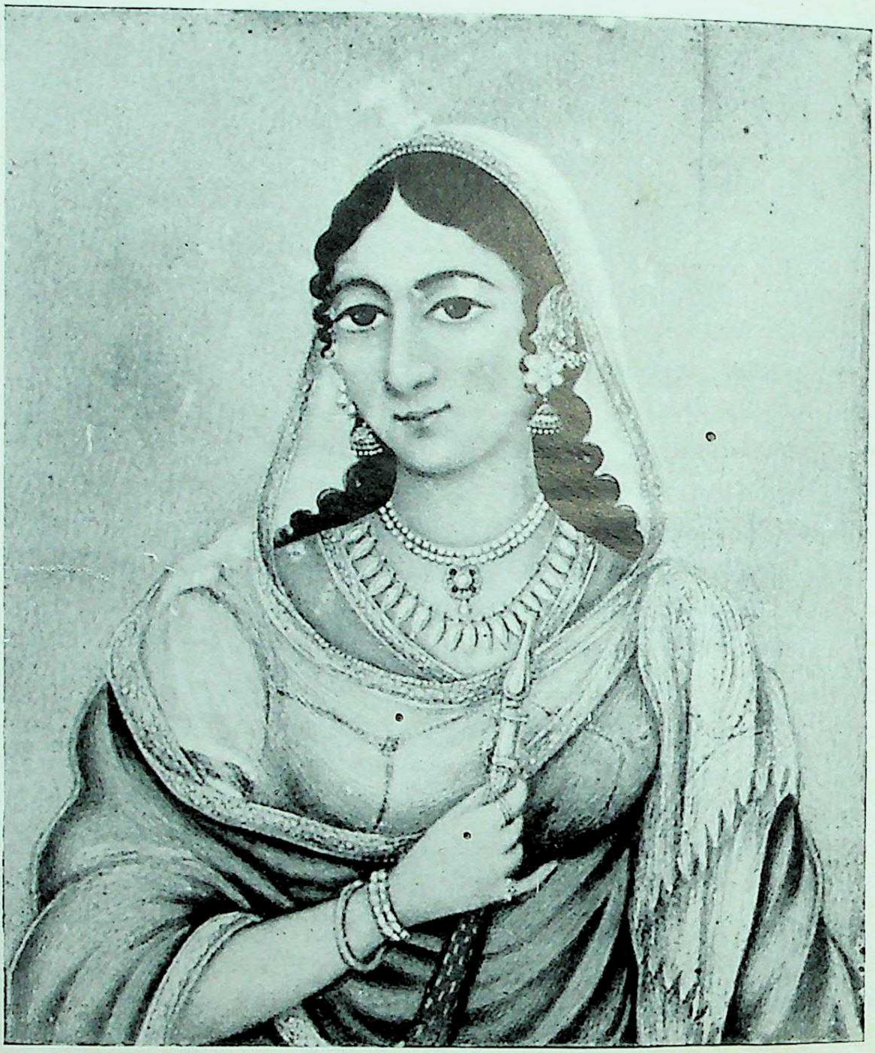


10. Patna School, *c.*1830. *Portrait of Great-grandfather of Rai Sahib Balgovind Malaviya.*



11. Patna School, *c.*1830. *Sweeper with Dogs.*



12. Patna School, *c.*1850. *Begum Bhao Portrait.* (Miniature on ivory.)

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Fanny Parkes, the wife of a Company Collector in Calcutta and Cawnpore, was symptomatic of this class. Not only could she draw and paint efficiently, but her vigorous enquiring mind led her to explore the manners and customs of the people around her. Between 1822 and 1845 she kept a diary, which was published in 1850 under the title *The Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque*.[1] Here she tirelessly jotted down any interesting custom or fact that came to her notice, and illustrated her record with sketches of the scenes that interested her—a *darwan*, or doorkeeper, a sugar press, a tiger in the Santal Parganas, a temple.

Charles Gold, a Captain of the Royal Regiment of Artillery, is a similar example of the cultured European. From 1792 onwards he made charming sketches, which were later published as aquatints under the title *Oriental Drawings*.[2] He drew flying foxes in banyan trees, wedding processions, barbers, sadhus, soldiers, women pounding rice, and hook-swinging festivals, and also made notes on various castes and customs in a manner similar to that of Fanny Parkes.

This interest in the countryside and in documenting everyday scenes was a common fashion of the time. It was natural for the sons and daughters of country clergy and squires to remain aloof from the people and at the same time enjoy the country, village life and outdoor sports, and, since about 1700, documentary pictures portraying country life and sport had been popular in England. Throughout the eighteenth century there had been two trends in painting, which were sometimes separate and sometimes intermingled. There was the fashionable cult of the classical style. Houses were furnished with picturesque landscapes after the style of Claude, as well as with the heavy classical compositions of Reynolds, Haydon and Flaxman. But running parallel to this tendency was a romantic interest, which grew stronger towards the end of the century. The realistic tradition of Hogarth, with his portraits of the common folk, such as the "Shrimp Girl," was continued in the landscapes of Girtin, Cotman, Bonington and Crome, and in the paintings of country life, racehorses, farm animals and the idealised peasantry of Morland, Stubbs, Ferneley and Chalon. This tradition was further specialised in the fashion prints recording English dress and costume[1] and in sporting prints depicting fox-hunting, coaching, horse-racing, pheasant-shooting, fishing and prize-fighting. Collections of flower studies, such as Dr. Thornton's *Temple of Flora*, and of animals and birds, such as William Daniell's *Animated Nature*, were also popular at this time.[2] Such prints and studies were being produced in great numbers between 1700 and 1860, and were at the height of fashion between 1770 and 1850.

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[1] Fanny Parkes, *The Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque* (London, 1850).

[2] Charles Gold, *Oriental Drawings* (London, 1802).

It is obvious that with these British interests carried over into India, a few Europeans would themselves make sketches of the life and scenes around them, but many more would be glad to use local Indian artists to make sketches which they could send to their friends and relatives in England.

Captain Gold refers to this patronage, and in his *Oriental Drawings* reproduces a picture of a lame beggar and his family which was painted by the

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[1] E.g., *Picturesque Reproductions of the Dress and Manners of the English*, 1814. Compare these with the Patna paintings. Also compare *British Regimental Prints*—e.g., William Hull's series, 1829.

[2] *Temple of Flora*, 1799-1804; *Animated Nature*, 1809.

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"Tanjore Moochy." "The accompanying," he says, "is the facsimile of a painting done by one of their artists, well known by the title of the Tanjore Moochy, and famed throughout the country, not so much for the specimens of his own invention as for his great skill and ingenuity in imitating the finest miniatures from the European pencil, so as to deceive people of good taste, if not the connoisseur. On the suggestion of Europeans, some of the country artists have been induced to draw series of the most ordinary castes and tribes, each picture representing a man and his wife, with the signs or marks of distinction on their foreheads, and not in their common but holiday clothes. . . . These drawings notwithstanding do credit to the uninstructed authors of them; and the world is about to be gratified with a series of coloured engravings from them, under the title of 'The Costume of India,' which, when revised by the hand of an able European artist, will certainly merit notice and encouragement from their novelty." If we discount Gold's attitude of patronage, we can see behind his comment the whole social situation which all over India was bringing Indian painters into contact with European patrons.

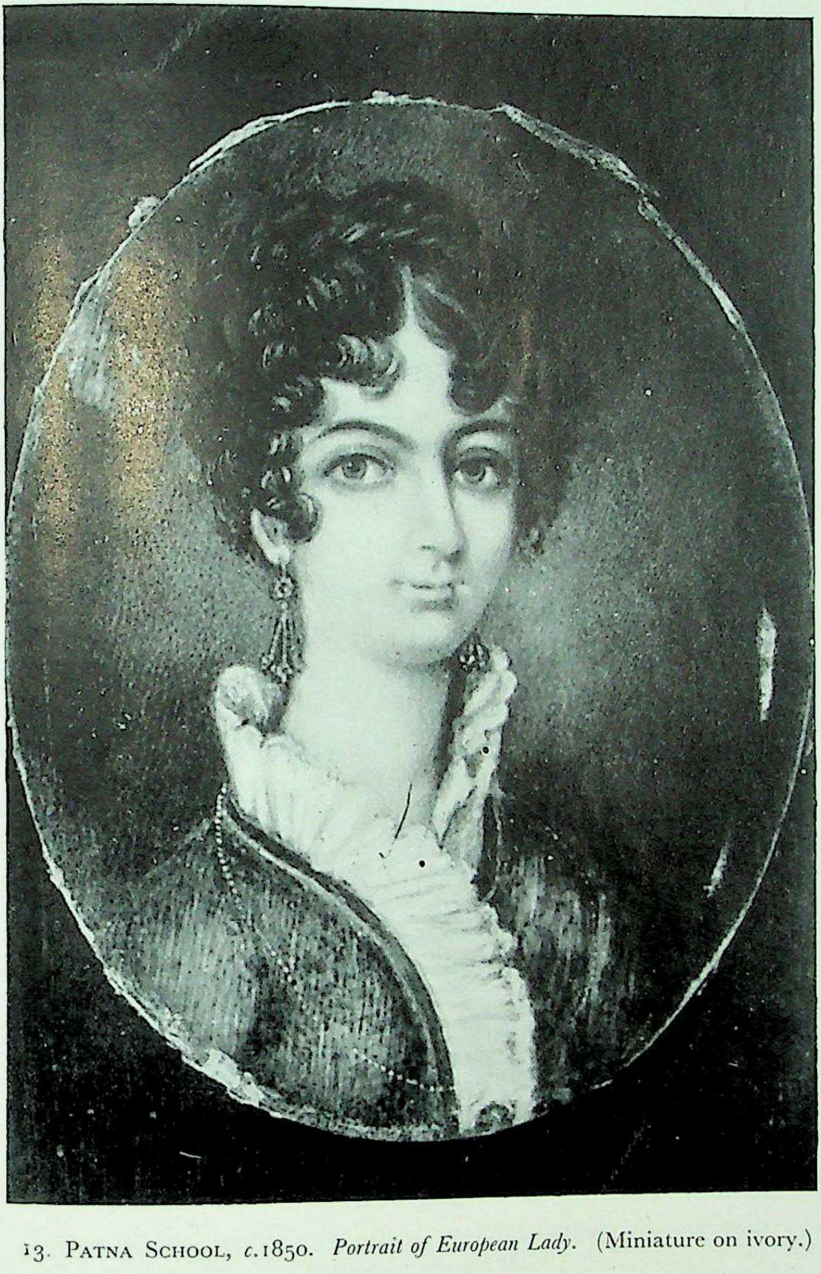
II

In the Patna of 1800 the European community combined the same aloofness from Indian social life with a similar interest in the picturesque, and it was this latter trait which gradually gave the Patna painters their expanded market. The city, which must have seemed at one time only a slightly more settled alternative to Murshidabad, was gradually seen to contain a new and specialised demand. The Patna artists began to experiment with compositions of local Indian scenes.

These must have been very popular, for they were gradually produced in expanded numbers, until about 1830 they had become perhaps the most lucrative branch of Patna paintings. The artists painted whole sets of "snapshots" known as *Firkas*; there were the familiar figures of the European compound: washermen, butlers returning from the market, tailors, maid-servants and sweepers exercising the dogs. They portrayed the various bazaar tradesmen and craftsmen: pedlars, bangle-sellers, butchers, fish-sellers, basket-makers, carpenters, distillers, toddy-sellers, candle-makers, sweetmeat-sellers, water-carriers, brass-workers, thread-makers and blacksmiths. They painted familiar town and village sights: elephants, ekkas, bullock carts, palanquins, pilgrims, milkmen, women grinding *dal* or spinning or going to the temple to worship.

A similar demand was being met by the lithographs of Sir Charles D'Oyly, which portray the same type of subject. D'Oyly's career is of great interest, for while he was posted in Patna he set up the Bihar Lithography, where he employed a Patna artist, Jairam Das, as his assistant. Several of his books portraying Indian scenes and costume, which had a wide circulation amongst Europeans in India, were made at the Bihar Lithographic Press, and it is interesting to speculate how far D'Oyly may have influenced the Patna painters in their style and subject-matter, or, alternatively, whether they influenced his own lithographs in any way.

Sir Charles D'Oyly was a keen amateur artist, and he spent his leisure time making competent sepia drawings of the countryside and sketches for lithographs. In the Patna Museum there is a large scrapbook of his landscapes, one of which shows himself seated under a huge umbrella sketching. While he was Collector in Dacca from 1808-1812 he took lessons from Chinnery the



13. PATNA SCHOOL, *c.*1850. *Portrait of European Lady.* (Miniature on ivory.)

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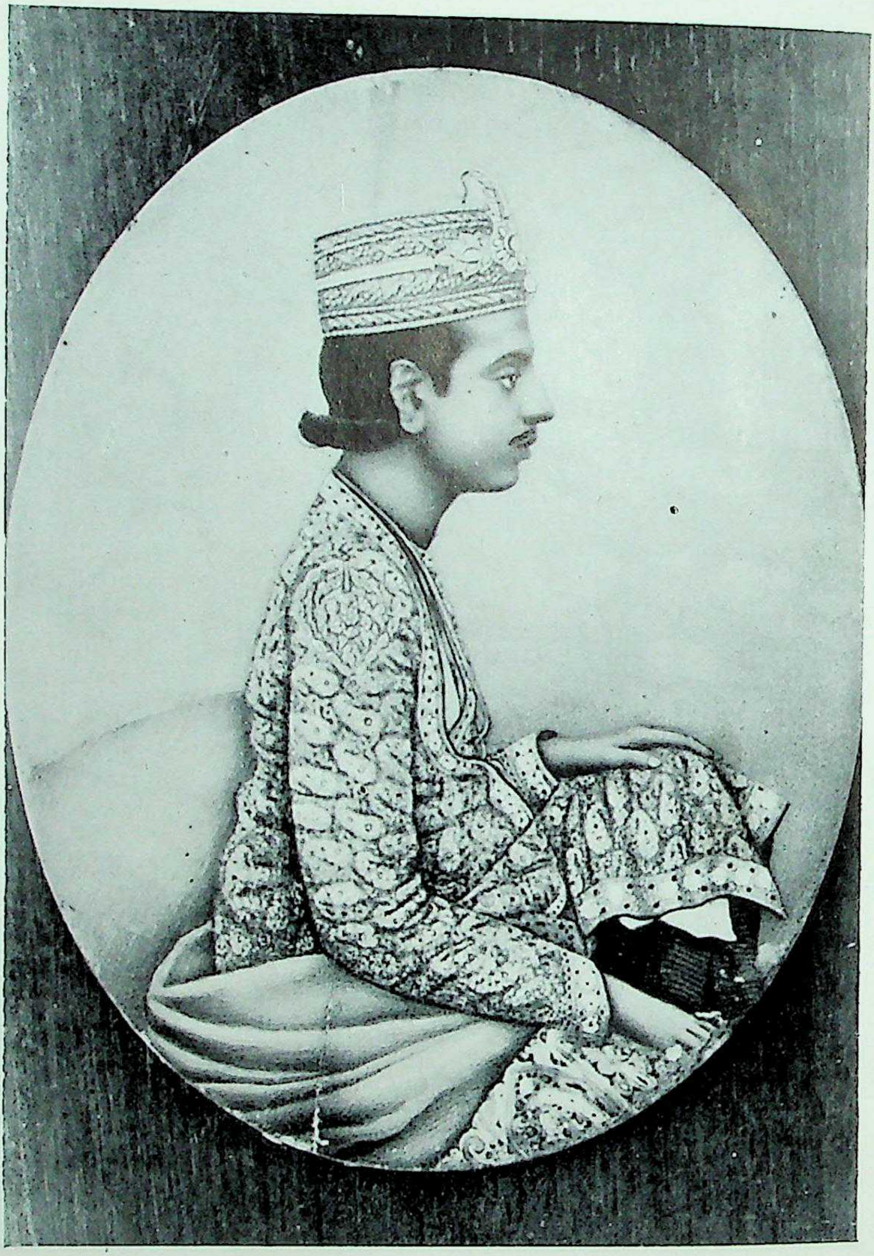
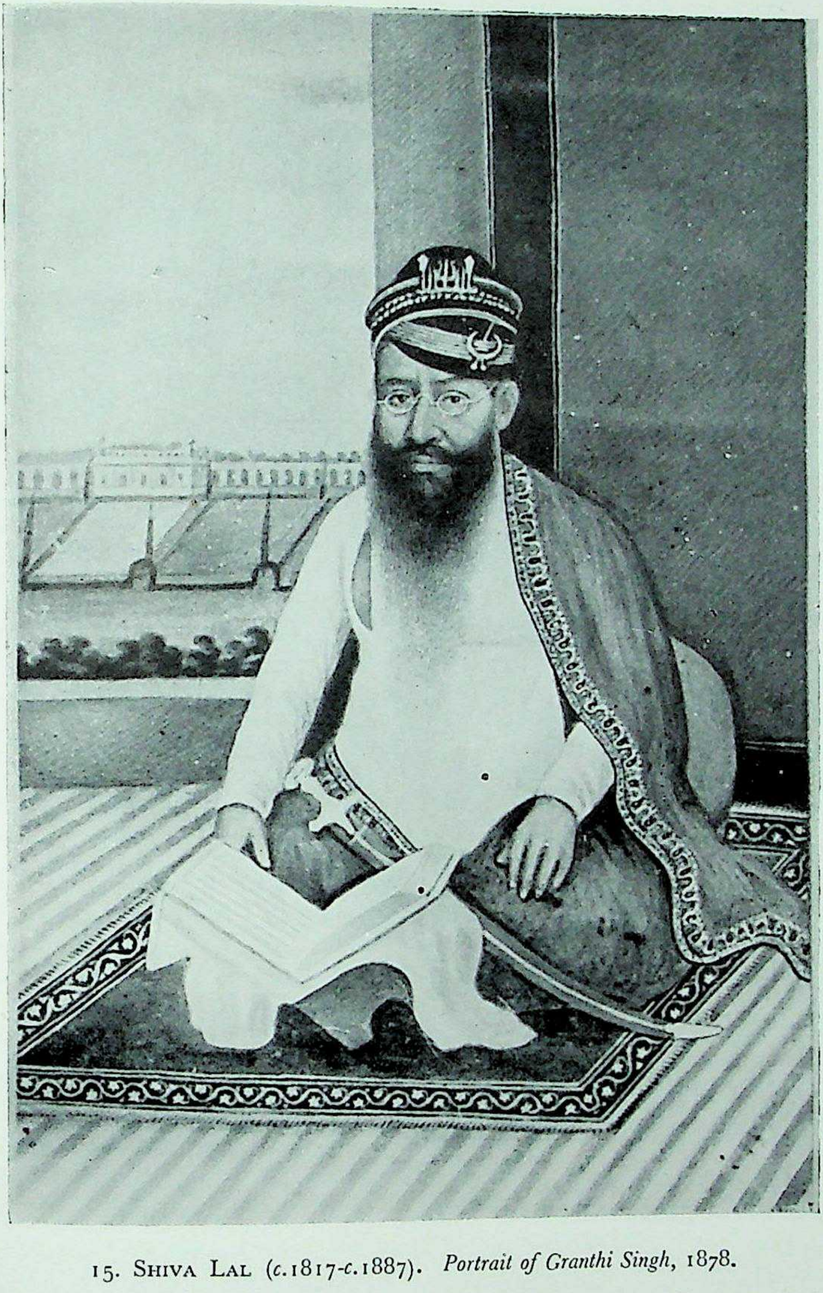
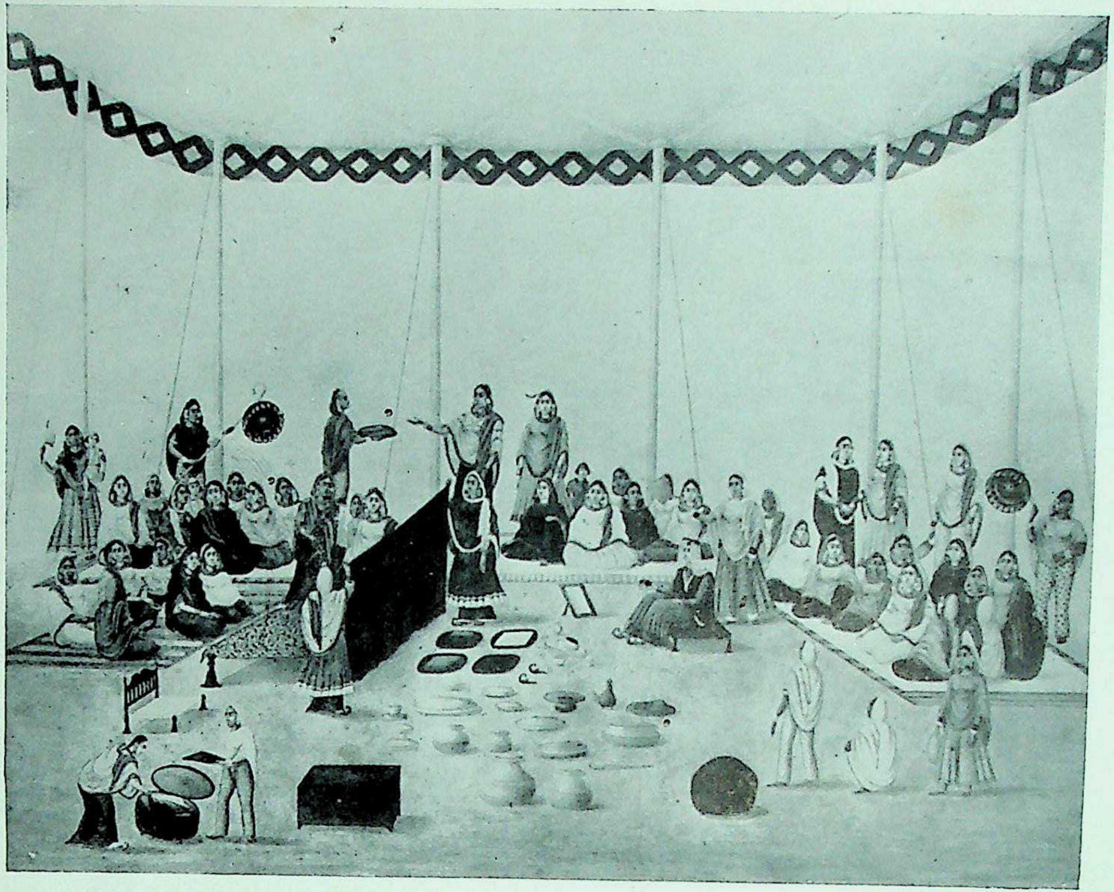


14. Shiva Dayal Lal (*c.*1820-1880). *Portrait of Rai Sultan Bahadur*, *c.*1855.
(Miniature on ivory.)



15. Shiva Lal (*c.*1817-*c.*1887). *Portrait of Granthi Singh*, 1878.



16. Shiva Lal (*c.*1817-*c.*1887). *Muslim Wedding*, *c.*1860.

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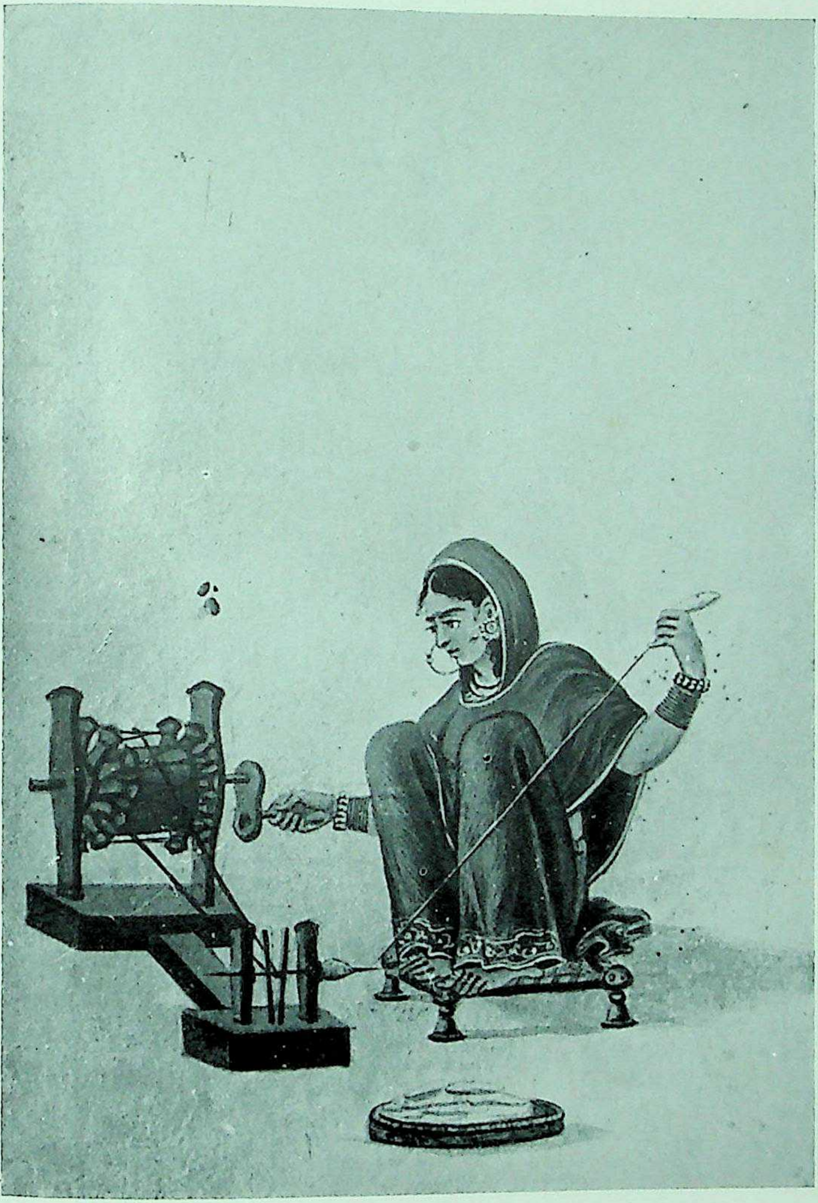
artist, who was living there also. D'Oyly refers to him in *Tom Raw, the Griffin* as "the ablest limner in the land," and it is clear that his style was influenced by Chinnery's. In 1818 he became Opium Agent at Patna and lived in the large bungalow at Bankipore on the banks of the Ganges which until 1942 was the house of the Civil Surgeon.

During the course of his career in India, D'Oyly published several books of lithographs and engravings. *The Costume and Customs of Modern India* and a smaller edition called *The European in India* were published in London in 1813, followed by *The Antiquities of Dacca* in 1816. In 1828 he published *Tom Raw, the Griffin* and *The Bihar Amateur Lithographic Scrapbook* ; in 1829 *Indian Sports*; *in* 1830 *Views of Calcutta*, *Sketches of the New Road in a Journey from Calcutta to Gyah* and *Costumes of India*. There is a large album in the India Office Library containing miscellaneous lithographs made between 1825 and 1830. D'Oyly stimulated other Europeans to make drawings, and in *The Feathered Fowl of Hindustan* (1828) and *Oriental Ornithology* (1829) the landscapes are by D'Oyly and the bird drawings by Christopher Webb-Smith, a picture of whose house in Arrah is found in D'Oyly's scrapbook. Some of these books were published in London or Calcutta, but *The Bihar Amateur Lithographic Scrapbook*, *Indian Sports*, *Costumes of India* and the bird books were all published at the Bihar Lithographic Press in Patna.

It is not known whether D'Oyly had any direct contact with the better-known Patna painters, though his assistant, Jairam Das, was related and well known to many of them. Nor do we know whether D'Oyly actively influenced the Patna painters, but if a lithograph such as *The Nautch* (Plate 48) or some of the illustrations from *Costumes of India* are markets, which at some points coincided and at others remained distinct, which provided the Patna painters with their livelihood and resulted in the style of painting which we term the Patna school.



17. PATNA SCHOOL, *c.*1860. *Woman Spinning.*

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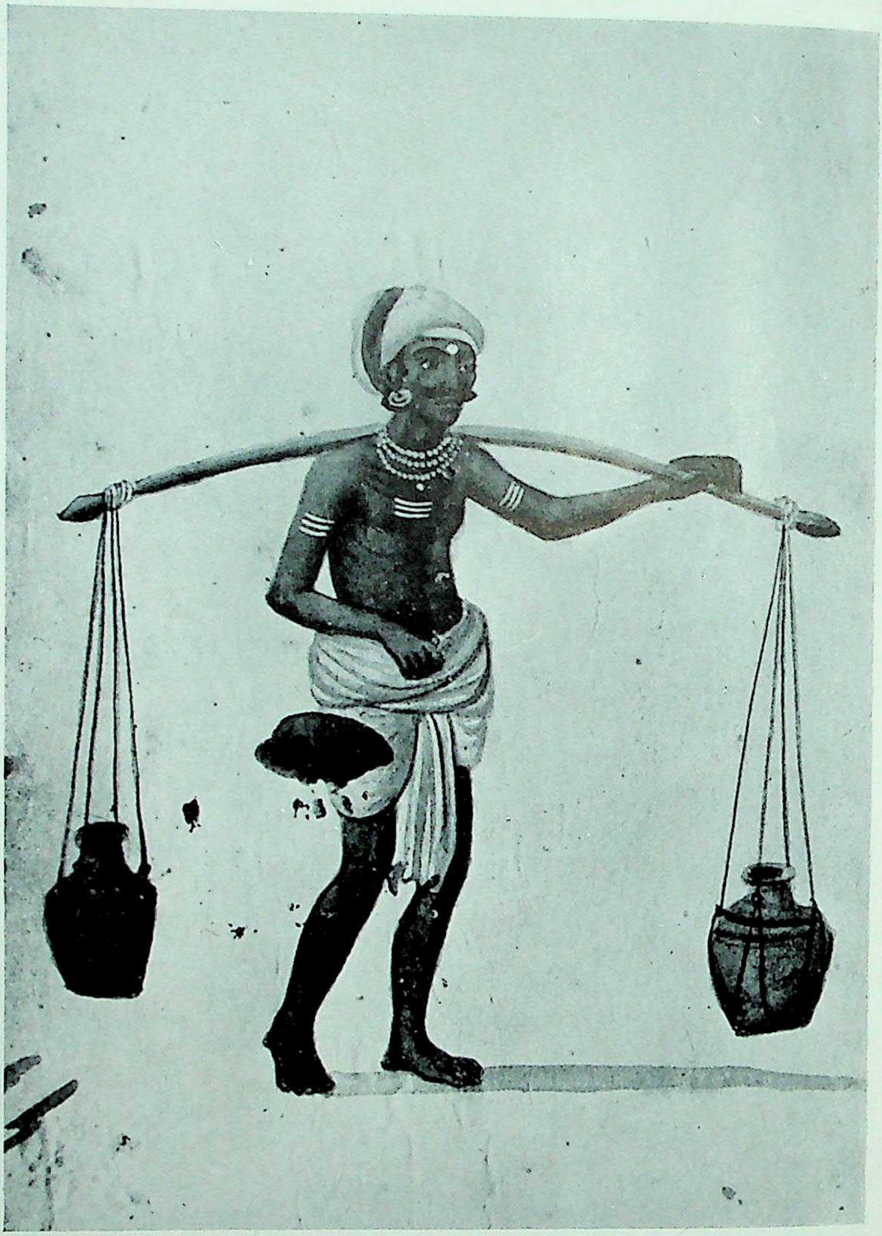
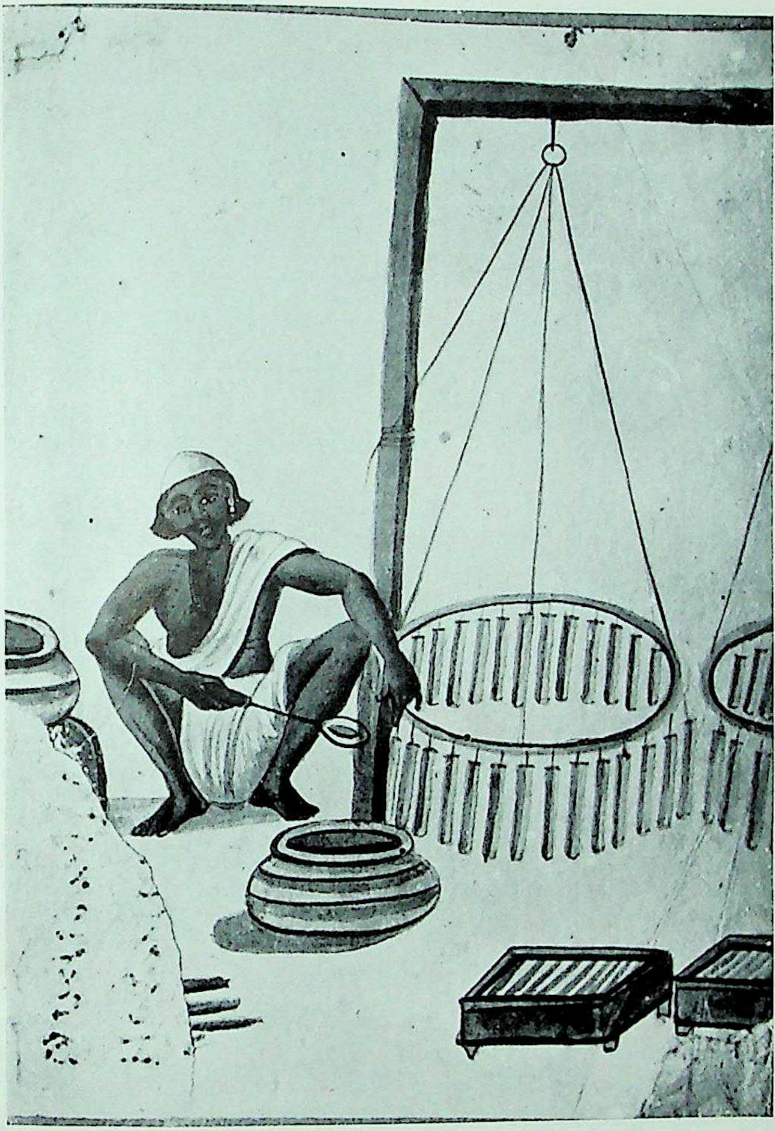
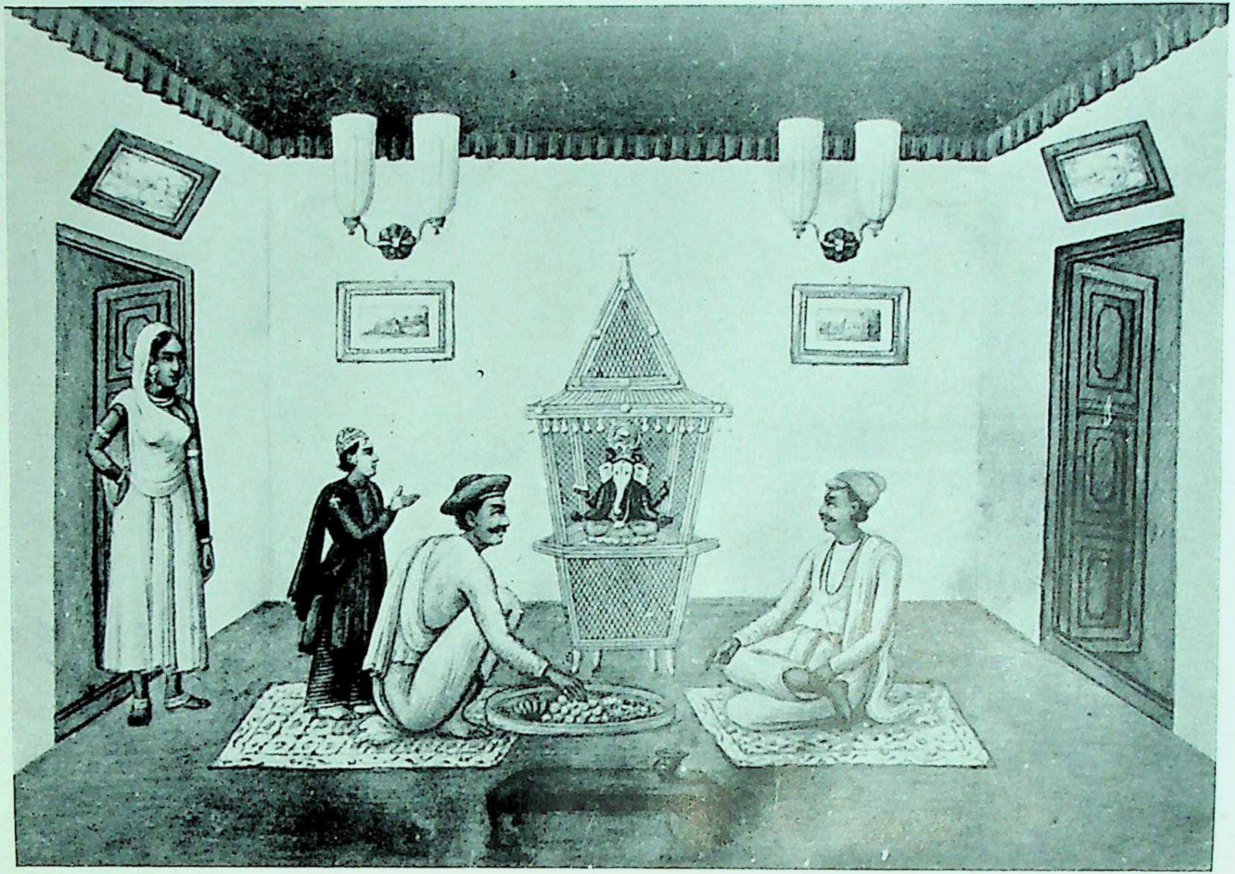


18. Gur Sahay Lal (*c.*1835-1915). *Pilgrim with Holy Water, c.*1860.



19. GUR SAHAY LAL (*c.*1835-1915). *Candlemaker, c.*1860.



20. GOPAL LAL (*c.*1840-1911). *Hatri Puja*, *c.*1870.

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CHAPTER III

THE PATNA SCHOOL IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

I

(1750-1830)

THE first painters came to Patna between 1750 and 1760, and settled in the Lodikatra, Chauk, and Diwan Mahallas,[1] and in Macharhatta. But apart from the fact of their arrival, we know nothing else about them. No paintings have survived and even their names are now unknown.

By 1790, however, the school was well established, and from the next forty years a number of paintings have survived (Plates 1-6). It is known that by that date a certain Sewak Ram (*c.* 1770-*c.* 1830) from Murshidabad was working in the bazaar, and it is with the work of this artist that our primary knowledge of Patna painting commences. At least twelve paintings by Sewak Ram were in the original collection of Ishwari Prasad, and reached him through his grandfather, Shiva Lal. As with all early Patna pictures, none of Sewak Ram's paintings are signed. But we need not on that account be scornful of their authorship. They are ascribed to Sewak Ram by a continuous tradition of Ishwari Prasad's family, and since they were handed down from one painter descendant to another there is no reason why this attribution should be faulty. It is likely that they remained in the family as models for later work, and it is in fact from these early types that the later paintings evolved.

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[1] Mahalla, a small suburb.

All these surviving pictures portray scenes of Indian life such as the European public required. They are painted in a technique known as *Kajli seahi*. The pictures were painted straight away with the brush and were not done in pencil first. They have a formalised precision, and are characterised by the pointed noses, the heavy eyebrows, the deep-set staring eyes of their subjects and their haggard faces. In certain pictures (Plates 1 and 3) the forms are a means to a geometric pattern, and the picture is built up as a succession of angular relations. The figures are usually in deep sepia and a sombre red ochre, while the clothes are dull white with soft grey shadows enlivened by pools of deep crimson and sometimes touched with dull gold and deep peacock blue.[1] This sombre colour range was undoubtedly influenced by the European prints and water-colours of the period, and it is evident that European contacts were already determining the range and style of Patna work.

But besides the paintings of Sewak Ram, the work of another artist has survived from this early period. About 1800 the families had been joined in Lodikatra by a casteman, Hulas Lal (*c.* 1785-1875), who came from Benares and was a cousin of Jairam Das, the painter assistant of Sir Charles D'Oyly. Hulas Lal's ancestors originally came from the United Provinces, and had for many years been working in Benares under the patronage of the Maharajas. Little is known of their painting, but the great-grandfather of Hulas, known as " Chandji," had a wide reputation. Of Hulas himself much more is known, for his grandson, Shyam Bihari Lal, has in his possession a sketch-book with " Hoolas Lal, Draughtsman " inscribed on the flyleaf, and several of the drawings are dated 1816. It seems likely that Hulas Lal was employed by the Company as a draughtsman, and that he supplemented his income by carrying out orders for both English and Indian patrons.

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[1] In *The Pedlar* (Plate 1) for example, the dominant colours are sepia, grey and white, while two or three rattles are red and the few mirrors are a sombre blue. *The Ekka* (Plate 2) is predominantly brown and grey, apart from the deep crimson of the turban and cart and a little steely-blue in the canopy supports. *The Carpenters* (Plate 3) is in varying tones of deep brown, and there is no other colour apart from the deep crimson turban of the left-hand figure.

His book contains sketches on deer skin (*charba*) which were obviously meant as models to be kept for tracing. It also includes drawings squared up ready for enlargement and jottings intended to be worked up later into larger pictures.

Some of the drawings are tinted and almost all are done in *Kajli seahi*. The notebook is of great significance, for it shows the type of market that already existed. The drawings of an Englishman and of an English boy in Empire dress shooting an arrow were obviously intended for European clients, while many sketches of Indian life provide the types which were now in demand among Europeans—women carrying their babies, a man with pots on his shoulders, a heavily loaded bullock cart and a group of dancing girls (*cf.* Plate 48). Moreover, like other artists of the time (many of whom were employed by the Company as surveyors and draughtsmen), Hulas Lal had had instruction in the European technique, for his notebook contains exercises in perspective and sketches of landscapes and boats which are identical in technique with the pen-and-ink drawings of Sir Charles D'Oyly or Chinnery. The style of Hulas Lal's early work parallels that of Sewak Ram, and the dominant colours share his same sad greys and sombre browns (Plate 6).

Apart from this work of Hulas Lal and Sewak Ram, a further small group of paintings, mainly in Mr. Radha

Mohan's possession, are also of this early period (Plate 5). These are specimens from *firka* sets which were originally secured by Mahadev Lal, and are ascribed by tradition to approximately the same period. They share the brown colours of the paintings of Sewak Ram and Hulas Lal and the formal precision of the figures. They use sharply contrasting light and shade to emphasise geometric volumes, and, as in the work of Sewak Ram, there is an underlying interest in angular pattern.

II

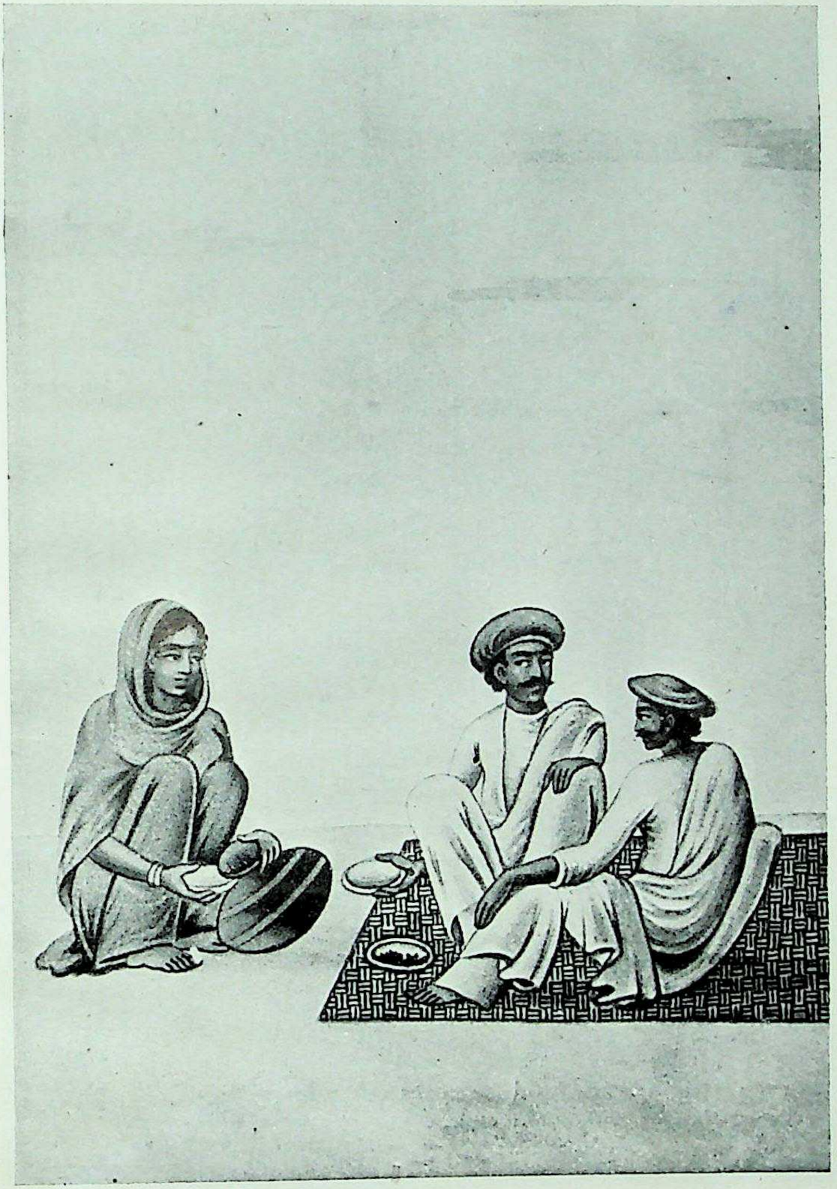
(1830-1850)

Between 1830 and 1850 the market expanded further, and the names of five artists are associated with a large and increasing output. We know that Hulas Lal and Jairam Das were painting throughout the period. A certain Jhumak Lal (?-1884) settled in Nitya Nad, near Lodikatra, while Fakir Chand Lal (*c.* 1790-*c.* 1865) and Tuni Lal (*c.* 1800-?) were at the height of their careers. Moreover, a few other paintings have also survived, and, although we do not know who painted them, it is evident that other artists were also working in Patna.

Although the tradition associates these years with a wide output, no paintings by either Fakir Chand Lal or Tuni Lal have so far been discovered, and we can only assume that, since their market was European, almost all their paintings left India.

Out of the few paintings which survive we may, however, distinguish three groups.

1. A set of five scenes of Indian life by Hulas Lal. These pictures were inherited by Shyam Bihari Lal through his father, Bani Lal, and consist of *Men Gambling*



21. Bani Lal (*c.*1850-1901). *Toddy Seller*, *c.*1870.

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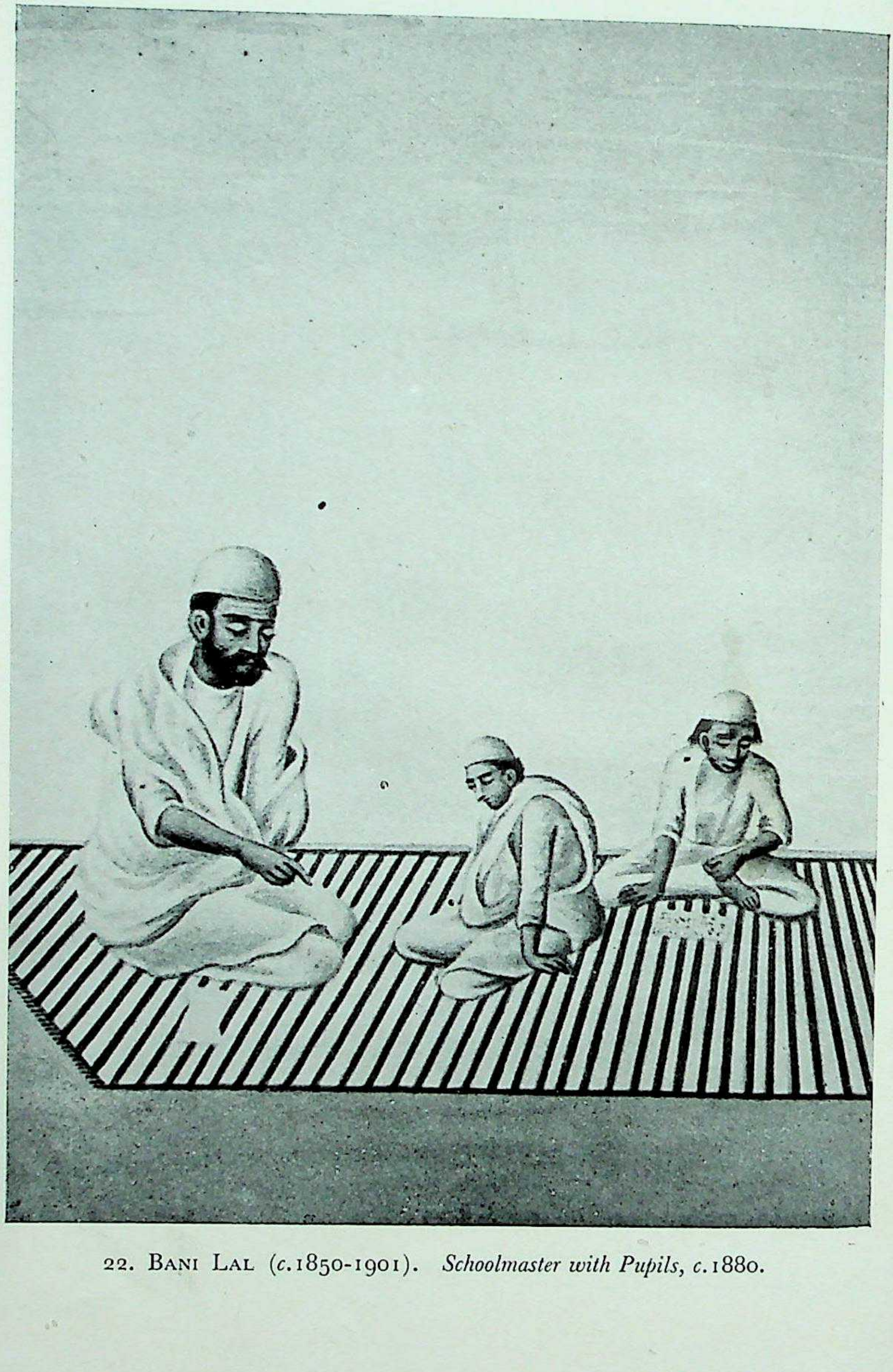
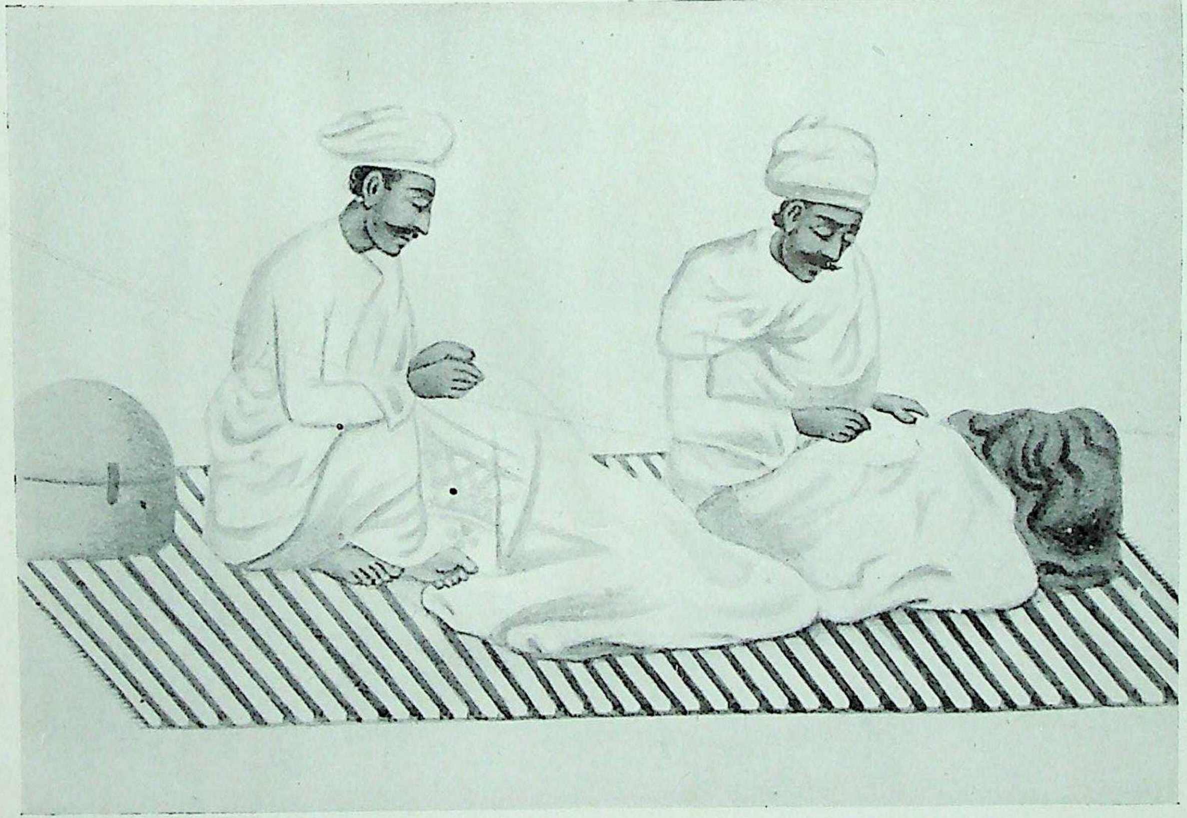
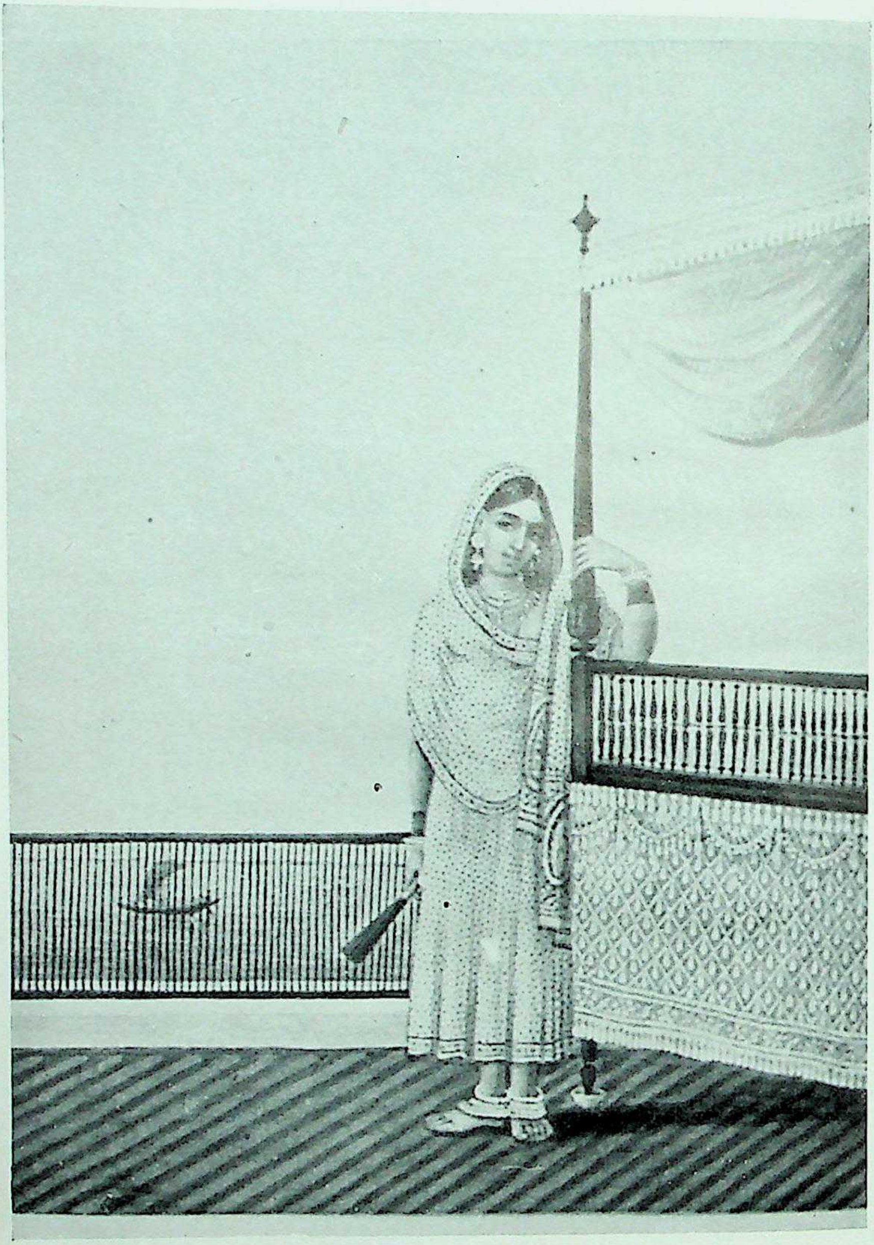


22. Bani Lal (*c.*1850-1901). *Schoolmaster with Pupils, c.*1880.



23. Bani Lal (*c.*1850-1901). *Two Tailors, c.*1880.



24. Bani Lal (*c.*1850-1901). *Maidservant, c.*1880.

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at Diwali,[1] a *Men's Music and Drinking Party*, a *Holi*[2] *Scene*, together with a sketch for a different version, and *Women Carousing at Diwali*. In *Men Gambling* a background of soft yellowish fawn is relieved by Chinese-white *gulapamba*[3] work on the mirrors, the Dacca muslin shirts and chandeliers, while brilliant touches of soft purple and bright blue light up the lamps, chandeliers and men's hats. The *Men's Music and Drinking Party* (Plate 7) has a similar fawn colour and is enlivened by the brilliant green of the doors. The *Holi Scene* (Plate 8), with its swirling lines, and the sketch for another version are in subtle shades of crimson. The *Diwali scene* (Plate 9) glows with blue, green, yellow, plum and crimson, and is far brighter than the other pictures. In these later paintings a fluid curving line links form to form, and Hulas Lal uses his naturalistic figures as the material for an organic rhythm.

2. A number of miniature portraits. These include portraits on ivory of European men and women (Plate 13), some of which are said to be by Jairam Das,[4] the painter assistant of Sir Charles D'Oyly, while a few are studies for Indian patrons. These latter (Plate 12) are mostly of conventional female types known as *Begum Bhao*.

3. A few early *firka* paintings. These (*e.g.*, the *Sweeper and Dogs*, Plate 11) have the heavy eyebrows, sunken eyes and sombre colours which derive from Sewak Ram, while a portrait of the great-grandfather of Rai Sahib Balgovind Malaviya, with its blue striped durrie

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[1] *Diwali*. The festival of lights, held in early winter. It is accompanied by drinking and gambling. [2] *Holi*. The spring festival, held at the commencement of the hot season.

[3] *Gulapamba*. Chrome yellow and Chinese white. This was used instead of gold in painting jewellery etc. [4] P. C. Manuk, "The Patna School of Painting," *Journal of the Bihar Research Society*, vol. xxix., pp. 143-169, Plate 16.

and sepia figures, although not itself a *firka* painting, has all the essentials of the *firka* style (Plate 10).

Beyond this tiny group nothing else has so far been discovered, and we can only conjecture what other work filled these important years.

III

(1850-1880)

Fakir Chand Lal died, an old man, in 1865, and it is unlikely that after 1850 either he or Tuni Lal produced much painting. Their families, however, remained, and from 1850 to 1880 Patna painting is dominated by the work of two sons—Shiva Lal (*c.* 1817-*c.* 1887), the son of Fakir Chand, and Shiva Dayal Lal (*c.* 1820-1880), the son of Tuni. As with their fathers, very few of their paintings have survived, but a great deal is known of their careers, for both of them were known to Ishwari Prasad. During this period the European market reaches its peak and the patronage of Indian gentlemen also becomes of greater importance.

The work of Shiva Lal falls into three distinct groups. Firstly, as a painter of miniature portraits he built up a large clientèle of European as well as Indian customers, and at the height of his career was making appointments much as a portrait photographer makes them to-day. He is said to have travelled up to Bankipore[1] from Patna City in his palanquin, completed the essentials of a portrait in an hour, and finally to have delivered the finished miniature for a charge of two mohurs. By the end of his life he was painting similar miniatures for Indian families and also doing portraits of Indian ladies from life. An unfinished painting of an Indian lady on

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[1] Bankipore, " a sort of Battersea to Patna," as Emily Eden calls it in *Up the Country*.

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ivory is in Mr. Manuk's possession,[1] while in the Patna Museum there is a portrait on paper of an Indian lady which was done, according to Ishwari Prasad, in 1883. Ishwari Prasad himself possesses a portrait of Granthi Singh, the Chief Priest of the Patna Sikh Gurudwara (Plate 15), which was made in 1878. For such portraits on paper twenty-five rupees were charged.

But besides painting miniatures, Shiva Lal also painted scenes of contemporary life for private patrons, and in this respect his wide contacts were of great importance.

Among Europeans, William Tayler,[2] the Commissioner of Patna from 1855 to 1857, was well known to Shiva Lal. Tayler was not only an administrator, but a painter, and his painting *The Defence of Arrah House*, done in 1858, is still extant, as well as his *Sketches Illustrating the Manners and Customs of Indians and Anglo-Indians*, published in 1842. After he had retired he published his autobiography, *Thirty-eight Years in India*, with a hundred illustrations — sketches made by him in India from 1829 onwards. Many of these sketches depict Indian costume and village life. Through visits to Tayler's house in Chajju Bagh, Shiva Lal not only picked up a little English, but extended his knowledge of European pictures and the European technique.

Another European contact was Dr. D. R. Lyall,[3] Personal Assistant in charge of Opium. Lyall also had an enthusiasm for painting, and it was through his efforts that a scheme for wall-paintings in the Gulzarbagh Opium Factory was worked out. Shiva Lal prepared a series of pencil sketches showing the history of the opium trade, but for some reason did not execute the paintings.

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[1] Reproduced by P. C. Manuk, *op. cit.*, Plate 15.

[2] *Appointments in Bengal and their Holders from about the year* 1850 *down to* 1906 (Calcutta, 1907), p. 101.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 89.

Shiva Lal's relations with Lyall were particularly intimate, for when Lyall was killed in the Mutiny riots Shiva Lal is said to have gone weeping to his house and "painted his portrait as he lay dead."[1]

Sir W. H. D'Oyly,[2] who was Opium Agent in Patna in 1873, also bought pictures from Shiva Lal, and is said to have given him a certificate on leaving Patna. It is with descendants of Tayler and D'Oyly and other English families with Patna connections that other paintings by Shiva Lal may still exist.

Shiva Lal was also widely known in Patna City, and one of his most important paintings, the *Muslim Wedding Scene* (Plate 16), was commissioned by a Patna gentleman.

But besides himself executing commissions, Shiva Lal developed and expanded a collective workshop which produced in large numbers "snapshots" of scenes of Indian life, trades and costumes on paper and mica, as well as pictures of birds. Shiva Lal was a shrewd business man as well as a capable artist, and he was alive to the European demand for this type of picture. In addition to organising the production on business lines, he also knew how to sell the paintings. When he toured Patna in search of commissions he took these paintings with him and canvassed their sale. He also went out like a travelling pedlar and hawked them round Bankipore, the Dinapore Cantonment and sometimes as far afield as Benares, Allahabad and Calcutta. On some of these expeditions, Ishwari Prasad as a small boy accompanied his grandfather. Each picture was priced at one or two rupees, but usually the pictures were sold in

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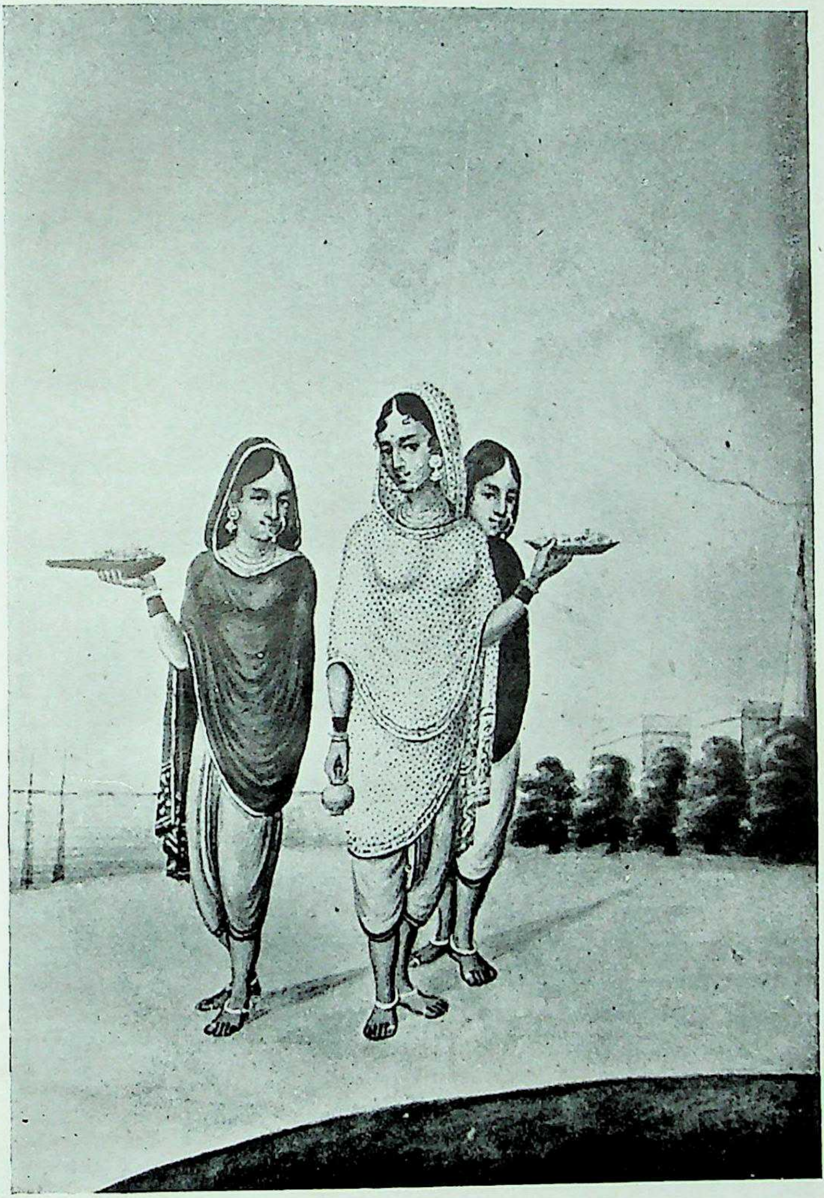
[1] Statement by Professor Ishwari Prasad.

[2] *Appointments in Bengal and their Holders from about the year* 1806 *down to* 1906 (Calcutta, 1907), p. 89. The D'Oylys were a large Anglo-Indian family, and many of them took a great interest in art.



25. BANI LAL (*c.*1850-1901). *Going to Worship, c.*1880.

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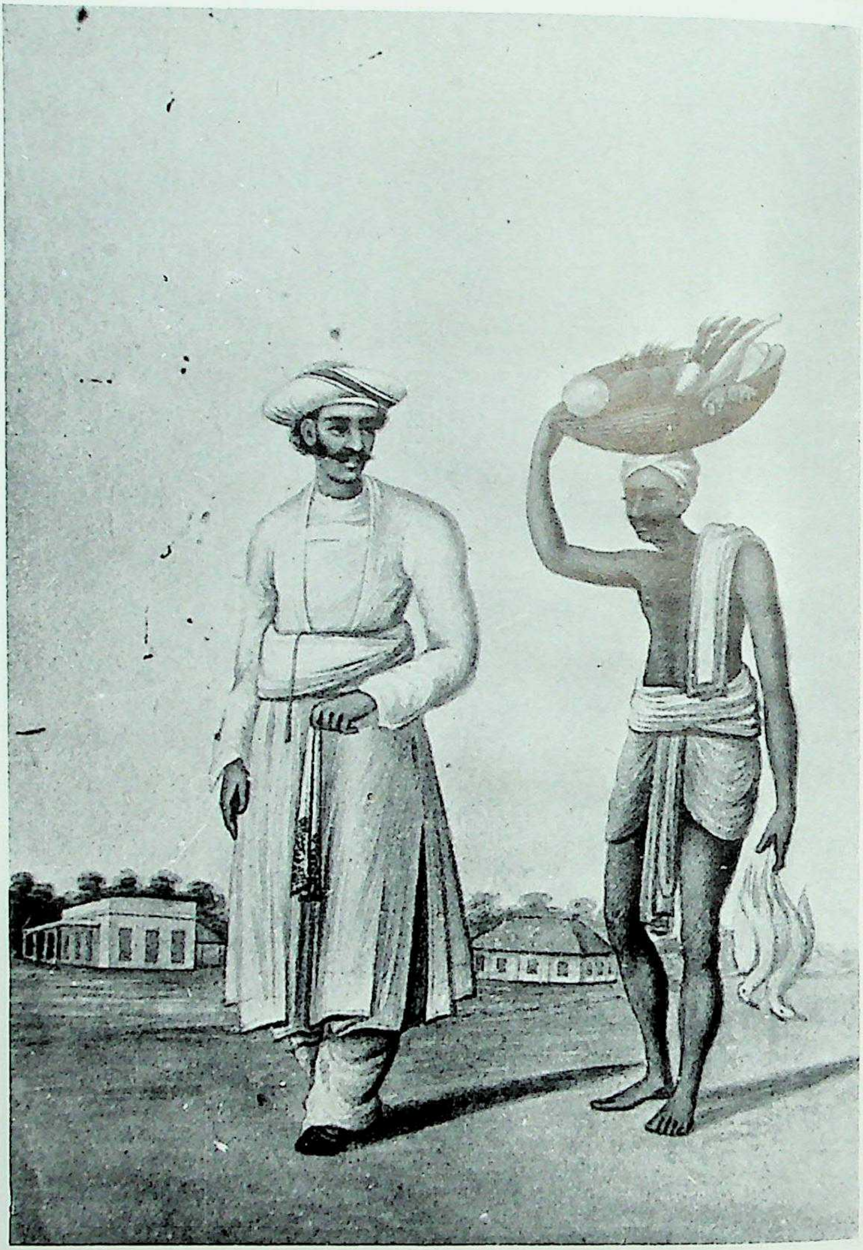
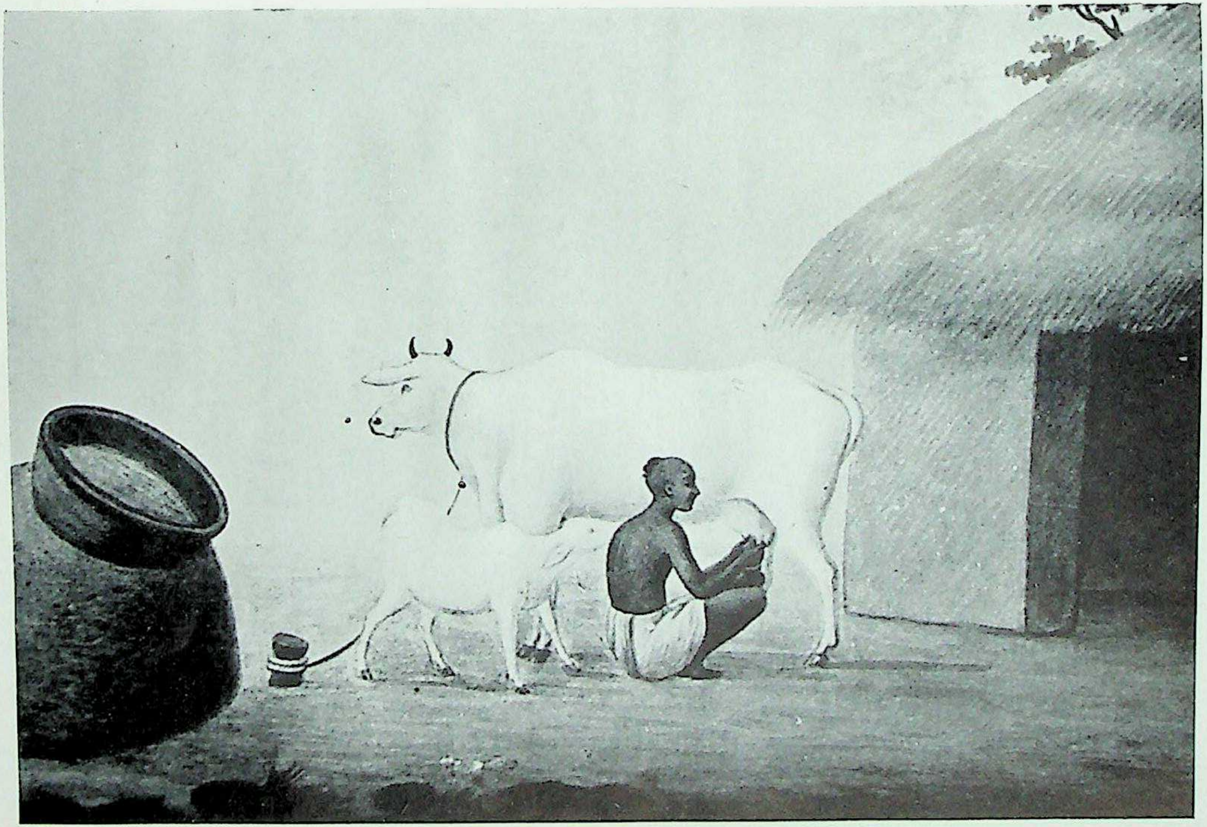
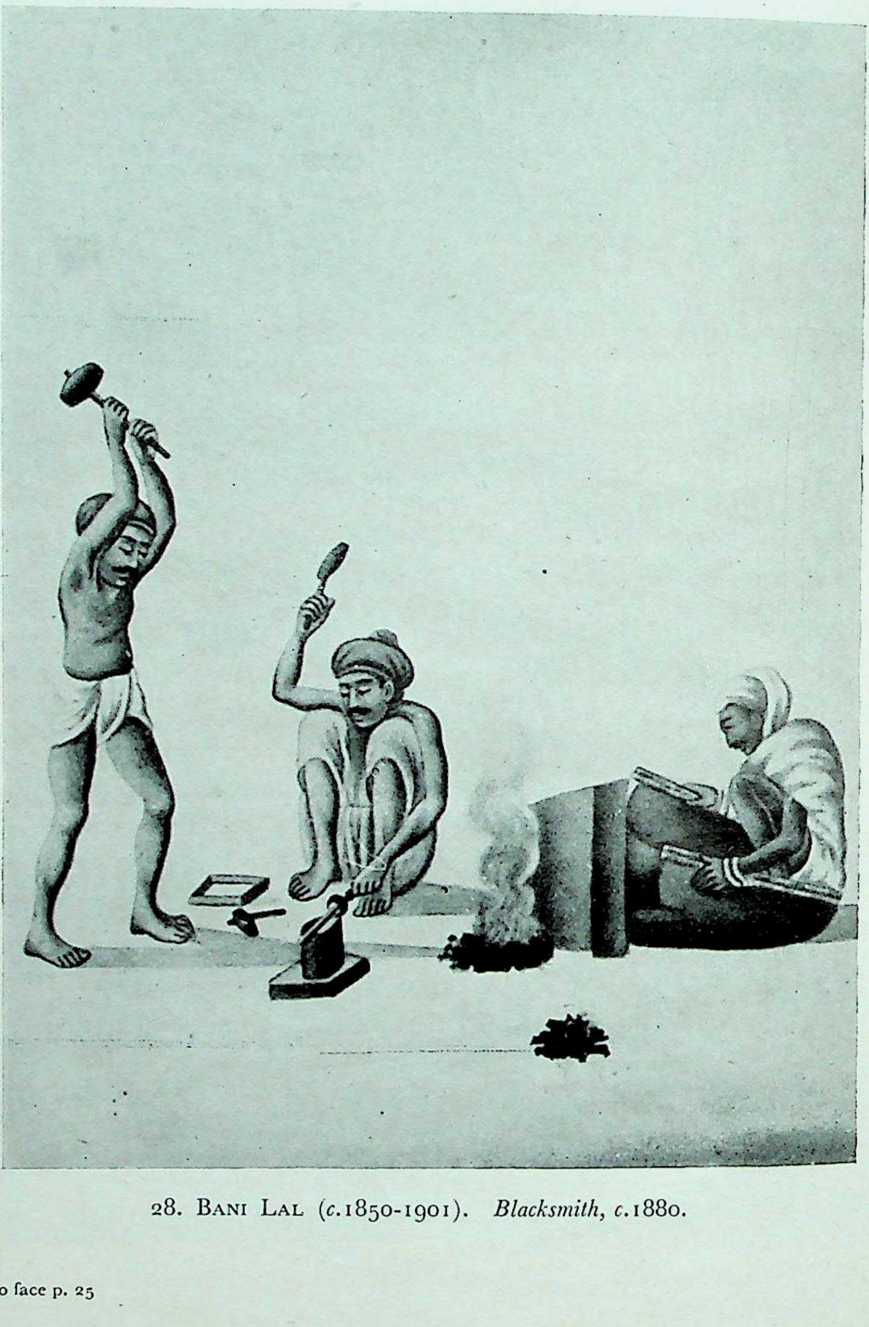


26. Bani Lal (*c.*1850-1901). *The Day's Provisions*, *c.*1880.



27. Bani Lal (*c.*1850-1901). *Milkman, c.*1880.



28. BANI LAL (*c.*1850-1901). *Blacksmith, c.*1880.

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firka sets known as " Native Characters," like the sets of plaster servants (nursemaids, bearers and water-carriers) which can be bought at Indian railway junctions to-day. The sets of mica pictures were sold in boxes of twelve for two rupees ten annas a box. On these journeys Shiva Lal also sometimes sold larger individual pictures of his caste-men, and Jhumak Lal, who knew no English, is said to have supplied a number of pictures to Shiva Lal for sale on commission.

Some of the *firka* sets were painted by Shiva Lal himself, and it is significant to note how his style echoed his three activities. His miniature portraits are marked by a delicate realism, a minute fidelity which borders on the photographic. His larger scenes of contemporary life have a careful precision, a balanced location of forms. The *Muslim Wedding* (Plate 16) is not a random collection of lifelike midgets, but an assembly of figures organised in a single rhythmical scheme. Finally, the *firka* paintings embody a careful naturalism and at the same time a feeling for angular pattern.

IV

Although Shiva Lal's reputation as an artist rests on his larger paintings, his importance for the school lies largely in his " workshop " art. This " workshop " did not have any rigid organisation, but was a loosely knit assembly of artists who recognised his superior business instincts.[1] Each artist worked at his own private commissions, and *firka* paintings were secondary productions which had a ready market and brought in a steady income.

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[1] The organisation seems to have been very similar to that of John Gould, the English artist, who inspired and kept together from 1830 until 1880 a team of artists all of whom did pictures of birds. Like Shiva Lal, Gould also was " a business man, and his own agent, salesman, publicity man, accountant and general manager " (James Fisher, " The Art of John Gould and Joseph Wolf," *Lilliput*, 1945, p. 291).

There were a limited number of *firka* subjects which were reproduced over and over again. Many subjects used by the artists of the earlier periods were repeated. There is, for instance, in the Patna Museum a picture of a Muslim burial attributed to Sewak Ram which is identical in composition with one done by Bani Lal's family about eighty or ninety years later. In these paintings the subject-matter and general layout conform to the standard types, though the execution varies from artist to artist.

Little is known about the actual organisation of the school between 1850 and 1860, but from then on it becomes increasingly clear and the names of six artists are known—Gopal Lal (1840-1911), with his elder brother Gur Sahay Lal (1835-1915); Bani Lal (1850-1901) and his cousin Bahadur Lal I (1850-1933); Kanhai Lal (1856-1916); and Jaigovind Lal (1878-1908). Other minor artists probably drifted through the "shop" from time to time, and the women-folk of the family also assisted. Shiva Lal's sister, Daksho Buddhi, and his daughter, Sona Kumari (the mother of Ishwari Prasad), both painted. Their paintings were almost always *puja* pieces for domestic use at festivals, but sometimes they helped with *firka* sets, the red border on certain pictures (Plate 17) denoting that they were done by women.

Most of these artists were trained in Shiva Lal's studio and began their careers as apprentices by making brushes from goat, squirrel, hog and buffalo bristles, and preparing the various pigments. In early days the painters had made their own paper from rags (*tulat*) or had used hand-made paper from Nepal, but by Shiva Lal's time

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ordinary European machine-made paper was being used. Gradually the apprentices learnt to paint, not in the Mughal way, but in the European way, drawing straight on to the paper in pencil, then colouring the picture and finally outlining or shading in a darker colour.

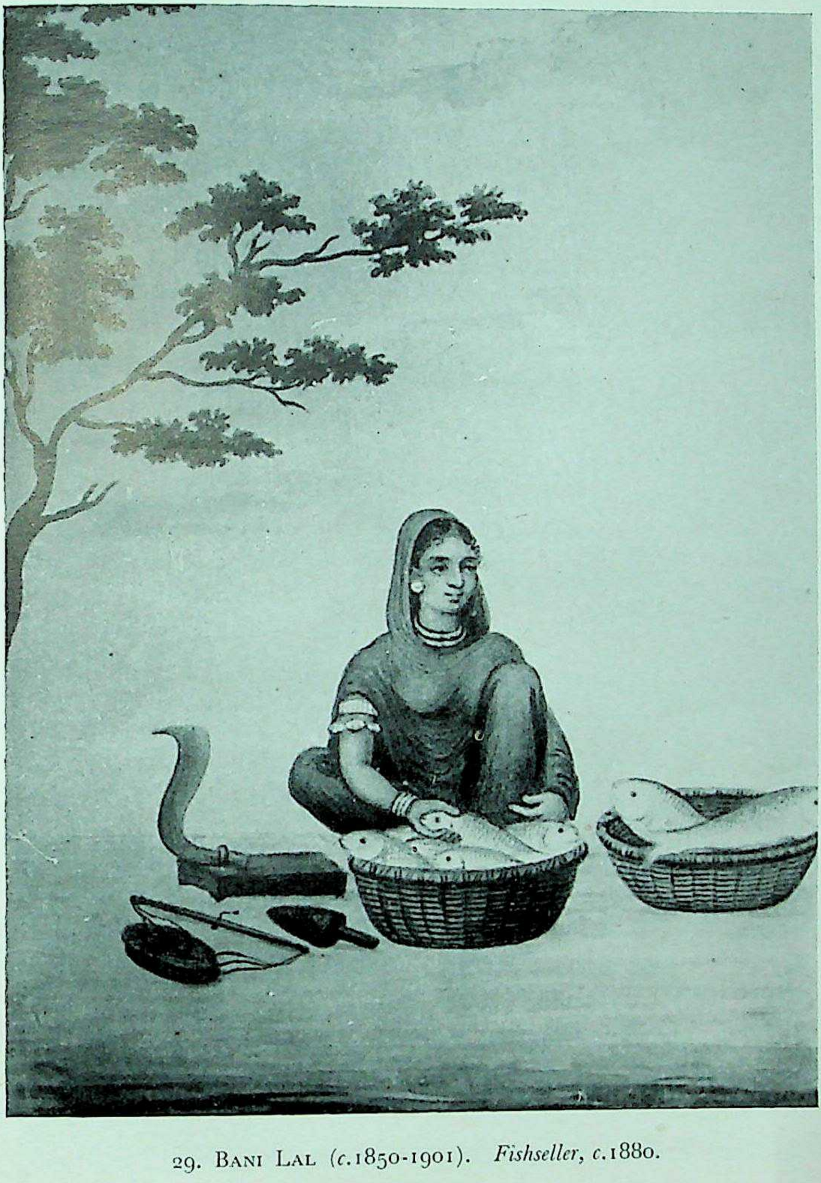
Of these artists, Kanhai Lal and Jaigovind are only names, and all that is known of Bahadur Lal I is that he painted the *Spotted Owlet* (Plate 33) and later left Patna for Allahabad.

A few of Gopal Lal's pictures survive, and these include the *Holi* and *Hatri puja* scenes (Plate 20) in the Patna Museum. In the *Hatri puja* scene the scarlet ceiling cloth, the green doors, the brown floor, the blue mats and the pink sari and turbans form an angry and restless scheme; but that he was an expert draughtsman capable of careful photographic detail is shown in his later *Pilgrims going to Hardwar*.

The two artists about whom most is known are Gur Sahay Lal and Bani Lal. Gur Sahay Lal was the older man and his style still retains something of an earlier period—the large eyes and curved lashes, the heavy brows and deep folds, the early feeling for a simple geometric pattern. His colour scheme is limited and rarely moves outside a gingerish brown, blue-grey and occasionally crimson and yellow. The *Pilgrim* (Plate 18) wears a navy blue band on his turban; the *Candlemaker* (Plate 19) has blue-grey pots for his wax, while the bodies are a natural brown. Much of Gur Sahay Lal's work consists of *firka* sets and birds, and the only example of commissioned work which now survives is a copy of an English sporting print. This was made for Rai Sultan Bahadur, who, like many Indian gentlemen of the time, was furnishing his house with English pictures. The soft greenish-blue of the sky and grass, the grey of the horse and reddish-brown of the saddle, are the sombre colours typical of his bazaar scenes.

Bani Lal's style is quite distinct, and his work, like Shiva Lal's, includes three types for different markets. Some of his miniatures on ivory have survived—a portrait of a wealthy Kayasth gentleman, a portrait of Lord Lytton, and an Indian lady. There are pictures of varied subjects—Arrah railway station, a dead goldfinch and a drawing of a woman holding up a mango to her child, which Ishwari Prasad says was a modified copy of an English picture. Above all, a number of *firka* paintings still exist.

Bani Lal's style is far more naturalistic than Gur Sahay Lal's, and there is no exaggeration of any kind. Some of his compositions, such as the *Blacksmiths* (Plate 28), have a vivid precision, and in almost all his work there is a sense of latent structure, a feeling for geometric pattern. His colour scheme is bright and fresh. In the pictures of the *Women Grinding Dal* (Plate 31) there is a yellowish-green tree and the women wear bangles of the same colour. The woman in the foreground has a rich brownish-yellow sari and crimson blouse, and the *dal* is golden brown. In the picture *Going to Worship* (Plate 25), red, pale blue and deep purple shawls are worn over yellow saris with green borders. The background, with its blue river, fawn road and green trees with purple shadows, binds together the brilliant scene. Various mannerisms continually occur in his paintings: a branch of a tree leans across the sky, a corner of a thatched roof enters the picture. The whole treatment is soft and delicate through a liberal use of stippling and an avoidance of harsh outlines.



29. BANI LAL (*c.*1850-1901). *Fishseller, c.*1880.

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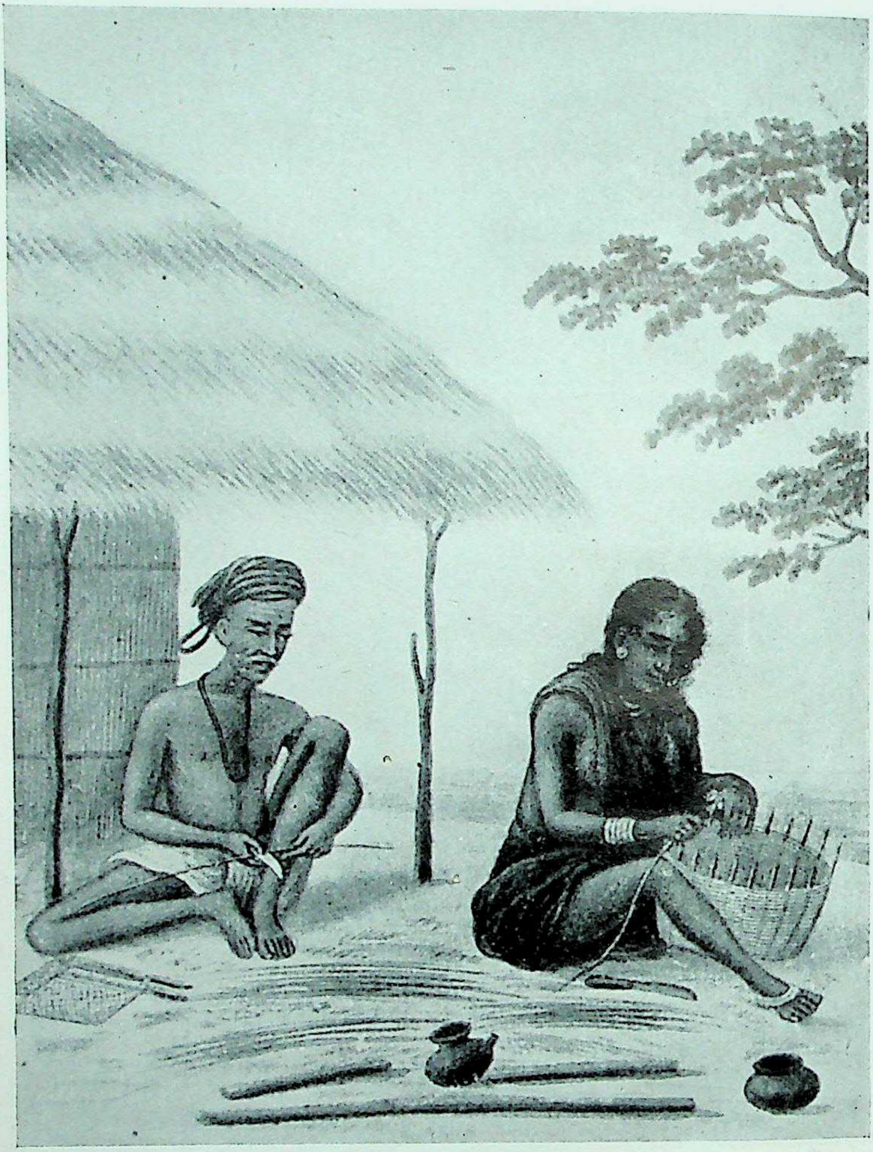
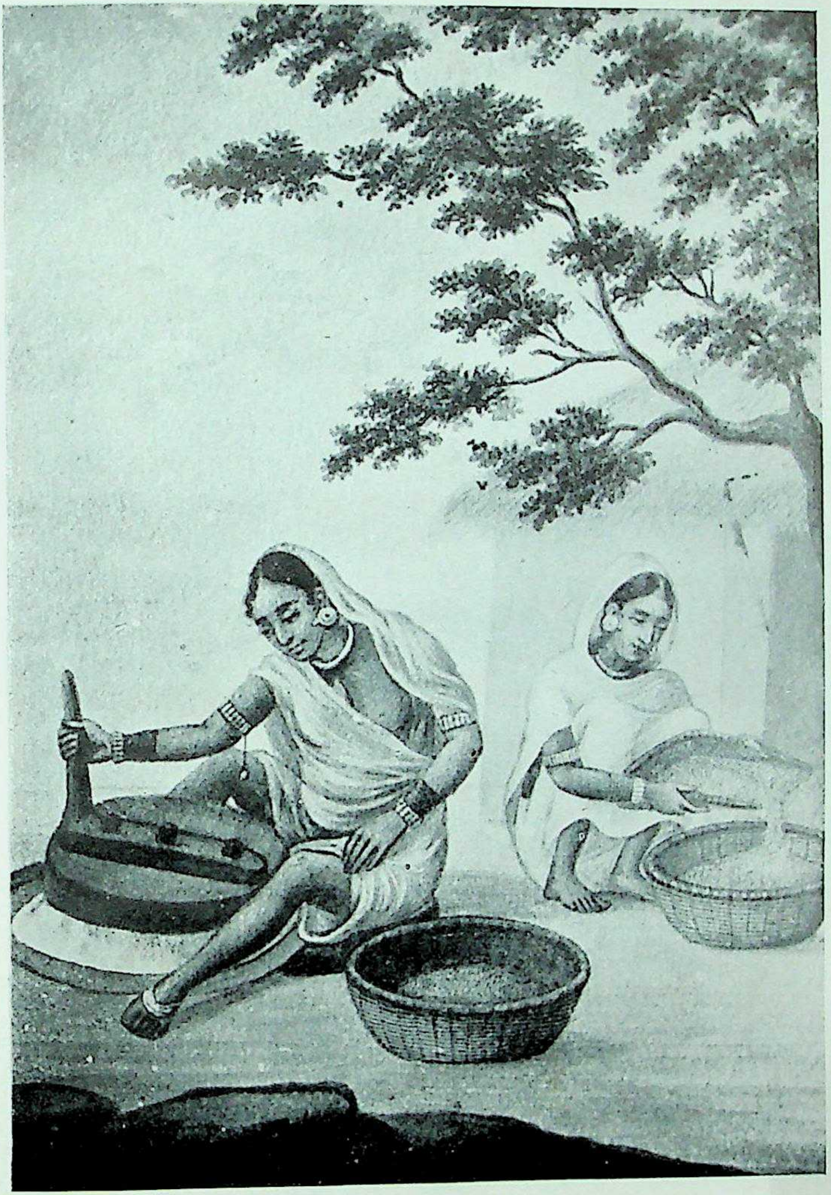
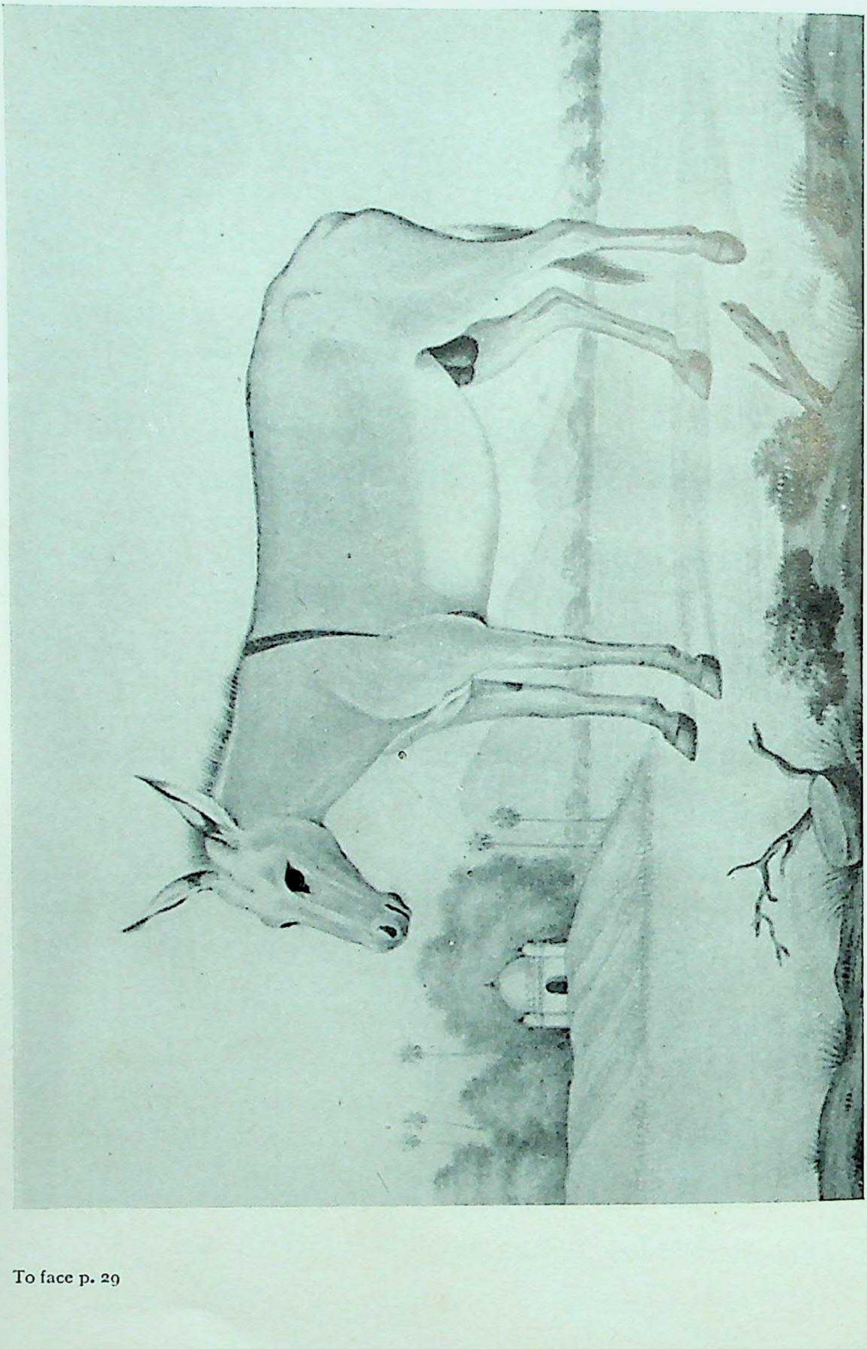


30. BANI LAL (*c.*1850-1901). *Basket-Makers*, *c.*1880.



31. Bani Lal (*c.*1850-1901). *Women Grinding, c.*1880.



32. BANI LAL (*c.*1850-1901). *Donkey, c.*1890.

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V

Shiya Dayal Lal's career and type of work were similar to those of his cousin Shiva Lal, but he was less of a business man and his clients were mainly Indian. He also painted miniature portraits on ivory and had a large clientele. Like Shiva Lal, he also painted scenes, and he was for a time the retained family artist of Rai Sultan Bahadur (1835-1891), for whom he painted the damaged *Chautari Ganga Puja Procession*, with Rai Sultan at its head. Moreover, Shiva Dayal Lal also had a workshop in which he trained young artists, the two best known of his assistants being Bahadur Lal II (1850-1910) and his brother Jamuna Prasad (1859-1884).[1] This workshop never reached the proportions of Shiva Lal's, nor did it produce so many paintings. It remains, however, an important factor in later Patna painting.

The work of Shiva Dayal's school is marked by its vivid colouring, precise outlines, fluid organic rhythms and by the use of the European technique of shading. This distinguishes its products from the work of Shiva Lal's school, which is on the whole marked by quieter colouring, soft modelling and geometric patterns. Jamuna Prasad's *Women Carousing* and *Dancing Girls* (Plates 36 and 35) are typical products. The former is brilliant with yellow and scarlet, deep blue and dark leaf-green saris in contrast to the blue-grey walls and the pale mauve curtains. Its colouring is oddly similar to that of Hulas Lal's picture of the same subject. The dancing girls wear blue and pink blouses and sit on a bright blue-and-white striped durrie.

The same brilliance of colour distinguishes the paintings on mica which were also produced in the shop.

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[1] Sons of Jhumak Lal.

The *Singhara Seller*[1] (Plate 34) wears an orange sari with a scarlet edge and is silhouetted against a bright red ochre background. Her baskets are dark brown and cream and a scarlet and green parrot sits on a bright green tree. The figures no longer have the early look of haggard despair, but are marked by a cool indifference, an air of mechanical posturing. The interest is in the hard effects of colour and the rhythm of lines.

Bahadur Lal's work has the same stylistic characteristics, but he is chiefly known, not for scenes with figures, but for the set of birds in the Patna Museum and the book of flower paintings done for Rai Sultan Bahadur after the death of Shiva Dayal. Like Jahangir and Dara Shikoh, Rai Sultan was interested in rare or beautiful flowers and birds. He wanted a record of the new flowers which were now being imported by Europeans into the plains gardens of India. The English names—Stock, Salpiglossis, Poppy and Narcissus—are dispersed in Urdu throughout the album. He also kept a large aviary of birds and wanted a record of them. These pictures of birds by Bahadur Lal are far more elaborate and complete compositions than the paintings of isolated birds done by Bani Lal and Gur Sahay Lal.[2] The latter are suspended in mid-air, and there is no attempt to relate them to a branch or landscape. Moreover, in all these paintings Bahadur Lal preserves the rich colourings of the Shiva Dayal style. He is attracted by shades of bright bottle green, chestnut brown and peacock blue, and even the musical instruments (Plate 37) share the same colours.

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[1] *Singhara*. The kernel of the triangular-shaped nut of *Trapa bispinosa*, a floating herb found on lakes and tanks. It is eaten raw or cooked and resembles the chestnut in flavour.

[2] If the bird paintings of Bahadur Lal are compared with those by Gould and Wolf, which were being done in England at almost the same time, the Patna paintings are far more satisfactory as compositions.

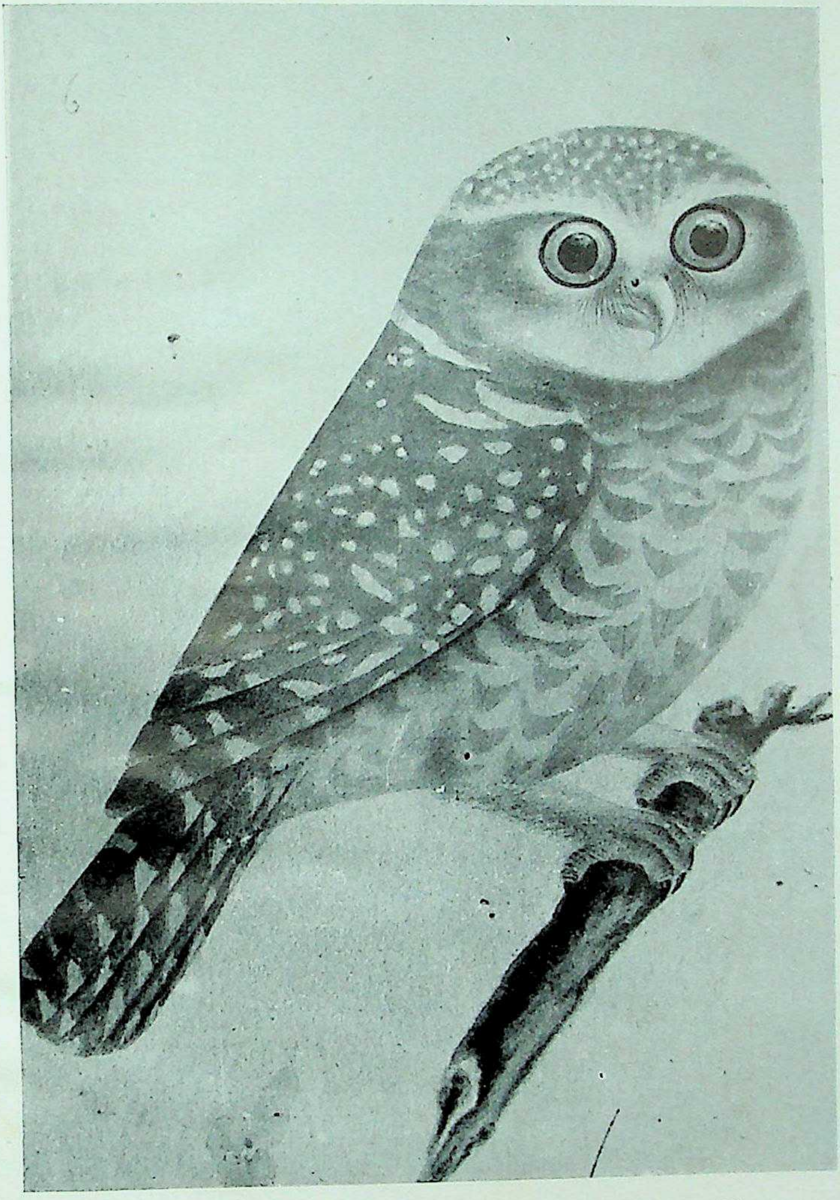
VI

(1880-1945)

In 1880 Shiva Dayal Lal died, and his death was followed seven years later by that of Shiva Lal. Neither of the two masters had any sons to carry on the family business, and after their deaths the " shops " lingered for only a decade. Shiva Dayal Lal's assistants were temporarily patronised by Rai Sultan Bahadur, but with his death in 1891 the artists were forced to look for work elsewhere. Many found work as designers for business firms or as draughtsmen with Government. Kanhai Lal went to Calcutta to work for Kettlewell Bullen and Co., Gopal Lal went to the Bowbazaar Art Studio, Gur Sahay Lal and Bahadur Lal II became designers for Kar Tarakh and Co. Jaigovind worked for Rai Bahadur Badri Das Mokim, the Governor's court jeweller in Calcutta. Others became tracers and draughtsmen in Government Departments. Bahadur Lal I went to Allahabad, his cousin Bani Lal became a draughtsman in the Arrah Canal Department, his son Shyam Bihari Lal now works in the Arrah Irrigation Department, and his son Jyoti (who still copies his grandfather's pictures) is a draughtsman in the Supply Department. The years 1880 to 1900 cover this period of collapse. But even prior to 1880 there were signs of decay, and had Shiva Lal and Shiva Dayal Lal lived on to the twentieth century they would still have faced a dwindling public and the end of the school.

The main factor in this collapse was the waning of the interest in popular paintings which had brought the school into being. Although this interest lingered longer in India than in England, where the Industrial Revolution had killed the sporting print by 1860, Europeans in India were by 1870 ceasing to value paintings of bazaar life. The fact that so many of Bani Lal's later *firka* paintings have been preserved suggests that he found difficulty in selling them. Moreover, the camera was fast coming into everyday use, and was fascinating all who were attracted by novelty. It could satisfy the interest in the Indian scene much more quickly and more literally than a painter could. Patna sketches had fulfilled the purpose of a snapshot or a studio photograph, and a public which was becoming every year less cultured and less interested in Indian art naturally preferred an exact and literal portrait or snapshot to a painting. When the "wet plate" first came to Patna, Rai Sultan Bahadur, one of the chief Indian patrons of the Patna artists, at once had his portrait taken, thus symbolising the readiness of the Indian community also to submit to novelty. Moreover, the cheap oleograph was finding its way into India, and its garish colours, glossy surface and elaborate detail were fatal to the simple and restrained paintings of the Patna school.

One minor branch of the school lingered on, thanks to the support of Rai Durga Prasad, the heir of Maharaja Ramnarain of Patna, who towards the end of his life patronised Mahadev Lal (*c.* 1860-1942). This young artist was introduced to him by his Diwan, Babu Punjab Rai, about 1880, and although Mahadev Lal is not in the direct line of Patna painters and had first learnt to paint in Benares from his brother, Bisheshwar Lal, he virtually belongs to the Patna school. As a young man he was adopted by Bibhan Bibi, the widow of Shiva Dayal Lal, and acquired the style of the local painters. Until his death in 1942 he worked for the family of Rai Durga, and in his turn taught Radha Mohan, the present principal of the Patna Art School. His paintings are quite different in subject from the main



33. Bahadur Lal I (*c.*1850-1933). *Spotted Owlet, c.*1880.

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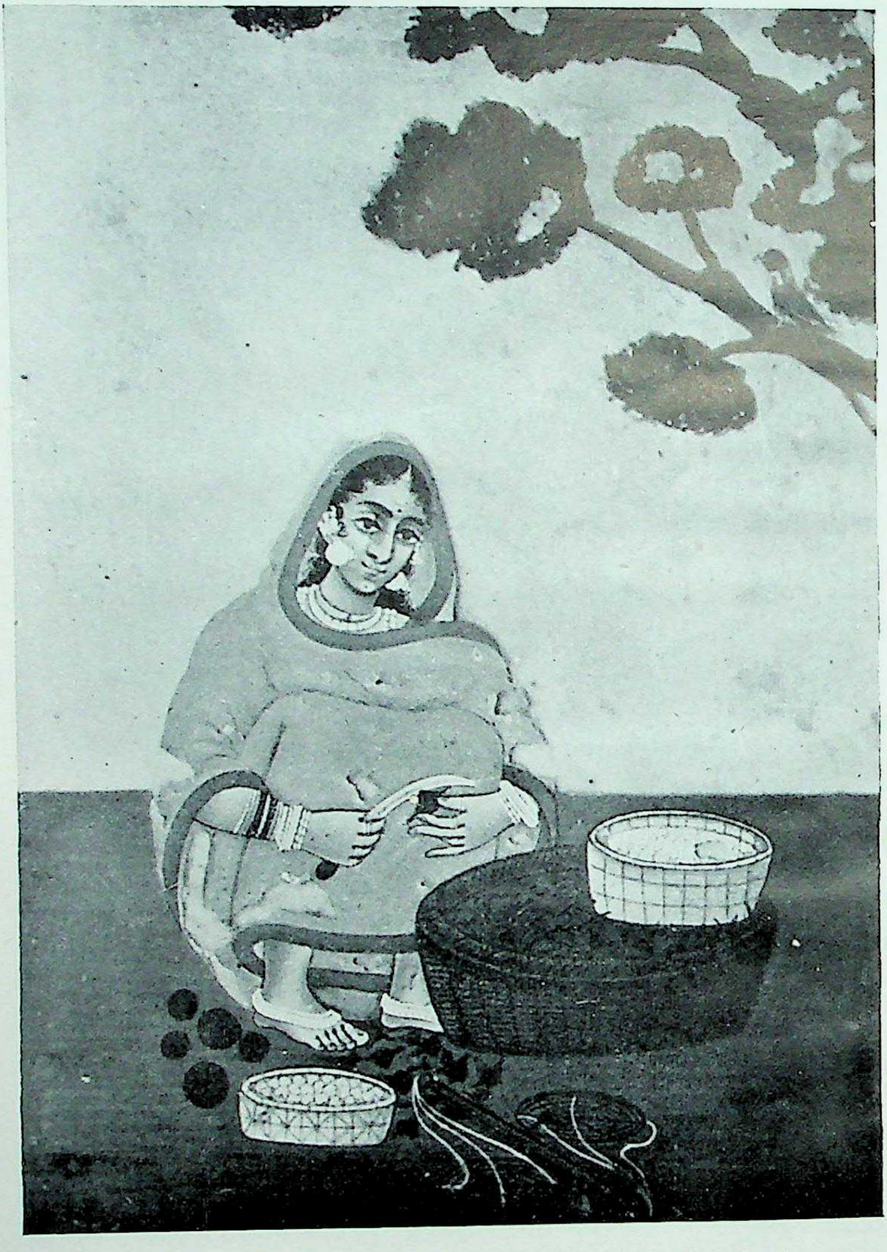
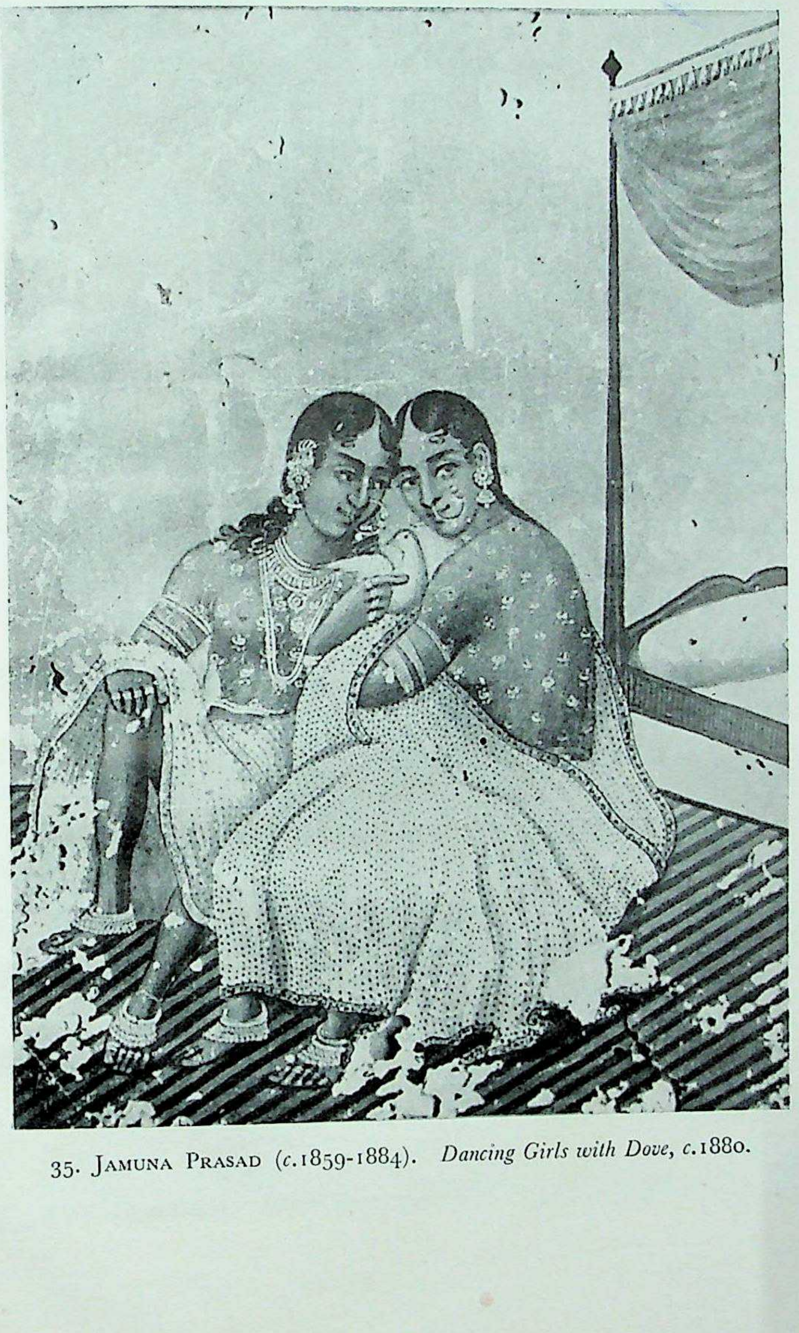
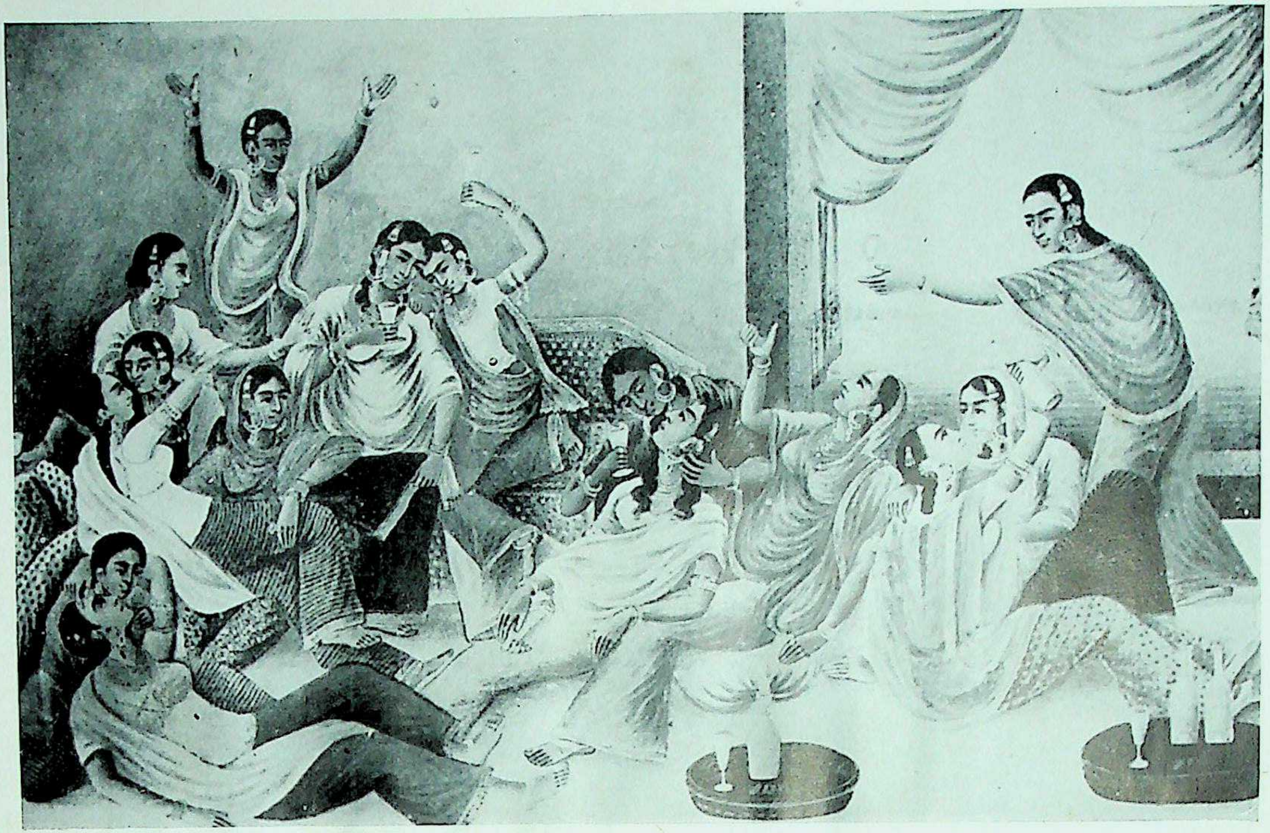


34. Patna School, *c.*1880. *Singhara Seller.* (Mica Painting.)



35. Jamuna Prasad (*c.*1859-1884). *Dancing Girls with Dove, c.*1880.



36. JAMUNA PRASAD (*c.*1859-1884). *Women Carousing, c.*1880.

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line of Patna painters, for Rai Durga commissioned mainly mythological subjects. His actual technique was often like that of the Rajput painters, and he used paint mixed with gum or linseed water. His style, however, is an obvious derivation from the school, and the group of men and women in Plate 45 are clearly in the Patna manner.

Finally, through a series of academic appointments, Ishwari Prasad (*b.* 1870), the son of Sona Kumari and grandson of Shiva Lal, was able to go on painting throughout the first half of the twentieth century. He had been taught by Shiva Lal himself and by Bani Lal. Ishwari's father, another Fakir Chand Lal and relation of Shiva Dayal Lal, was a supervisor in a military department and descended from a Subahdar Bahadur in the East India Company Sappers from Allahabad. As a young man, Ishwari was the retained artist of Raja Lachman Das Seth of Mathura. In 1904 he became Professor of Fine Arts and Indian Painting at the School of Art, Calcutta, and for a time officiated as Vice-Principal. As a teacher he acquired a variety of styles and must have influenced many of the younger painters of Bengal by his technical accomplishment. In his retirement at Arrah he has again reverted to the style of the Patna painters (Plate 47), and with these paintings by the grandson of Shiva Lal the Patna school ends.

CHAPTER IV

THE SCHOOL AND ITS INFLUENCES

THE Patna artists were descendants of the Mughal painters, and in their migration first to Murshidabad and then to Patna they had carried with them certain characteristics of the Mughal style. These characteristics had gradually weakened, and at decisive moments in their history they had also come in contact with European influences. To understand the Patna school we must, therefore, analyse the Mughal and European elements in its work.

The Mughal paintings, which the ancestors of the Patna school had painted, and by which even in Murshidabad days at the court of the Nawabs they had been surrounded, were always in the miniature style—small pictures suitable for book illustration or for keeping in albums. The subject-matter was suited to this purpose—small scenes of battles, hunting scenes, sports, durbars, palaces, portraits of the great, rare birds and flowers. Moreover, the style of Mughal pictures tended to conform to standard types, for in India until the present century no emphasis was laid on individuality. The whole organisation of the studios with its division of work made for uniformity of style, for one picture was often made by several hands.

The main characteristic of this collective style is the brilliance and definition of its colour combinations. There is very little shading, only a faint modelling with stippling, and little blending of colour. The compositions depend on the juxtaposition of

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brilliant colours and their relation one to another. In the best miniatures the areas of colour are bounded by a vigorous line which springs and moves across the picture. It is by this line (painted in a darker shade of the colour which it surrounds) that the areas of colour are linked together and related to each other. This line is painted with microscopic perfection often by a brush of only one hair. The style is rigidly bound by its own conventions, which are completely different from those of the West. Perspective, as understood in the West, is unknown, but a different, although an equally strict, convention prescribes the relation of various planes to express distance, breadth and height. A Mughal painter could at one and the same moment show the outside, the inside and the top of a house. This lack of scientific perspective was not due to any lack of technical skill, for at times the Mughal artists made use of the European convention. The style was merely bound by different conventions. In portraiture, too, equally rigid conventions existed. The face is nearly always shown in profile and the figure posed against a low horizon. These unrealistic conventions led to a style in which pattern—whether geometric or organic—receives continued emphasis. A Mughal picture is in essence a pattern of coloured shapes and lines.

European painting in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was completely different. It is unlikely that the Patna artists had seen or been influenced by any European work of an earlier period.[1] Pictures they had undoubtedly seen in the houses of Europeans or for sale at auctions in their Murshidabad days, and later in Patna. Pictures were certainly brought out to India by Europeans, and are often mentioned in the sales of their effects. The sale lists refer again and again to " a parcel of pictures," " 20 old pictures in wooden frames," " a set of prints representing the Passions."[1] General Claude Martin of Lucknow left 150 paintings in oils, as well as pictures by Zoffany.[2]

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[1] For the influence of European art on the Mughal artists of the seventeenth century, see Sir Edward Maclagan, *The Jesuits and the Great Mogul* (London, 1932).

These pictures were of three kinds. There were, firstly, numerous oil portraits which had nothing in common with a Mughal portrait. They were painted from the life, and the pose was left to the whim of the artist or the sitter. They were as lifelike as possible, and the technique aimed at copying nature. The bold brush strokes of an oil painting are as far removed from the miniature technique as is possible. By the early nineteenth century most portrait painting was worthless and was mere commercial hack-work. The various artists, Hodges, Longcroft, Zoffany and Home, who came to India about this time to paint portraits were, with the exception of Zoffany, mediocre.

The second type of picture was the miniature portrait. Most European families in India possessed a few miniature portraits by Smart, Cosway, George Engleheart or some lesser artist. These portraits, however, were not like the Indian " type " portrait, but were made from life and aimed at exact realism. As in the large portraits, there was no set pose. The colour scheme was usually sombre. Smart's miniatures are marked by quiet grey colouring, brown backgrounds and subtle modelling.

The third type of picture which the Patna painters must have seen were prints and engravings. It is unlikely that many Europeans brought valuable original pictures to India. The hazards of the journey and the climate, the import duties, and the fact that

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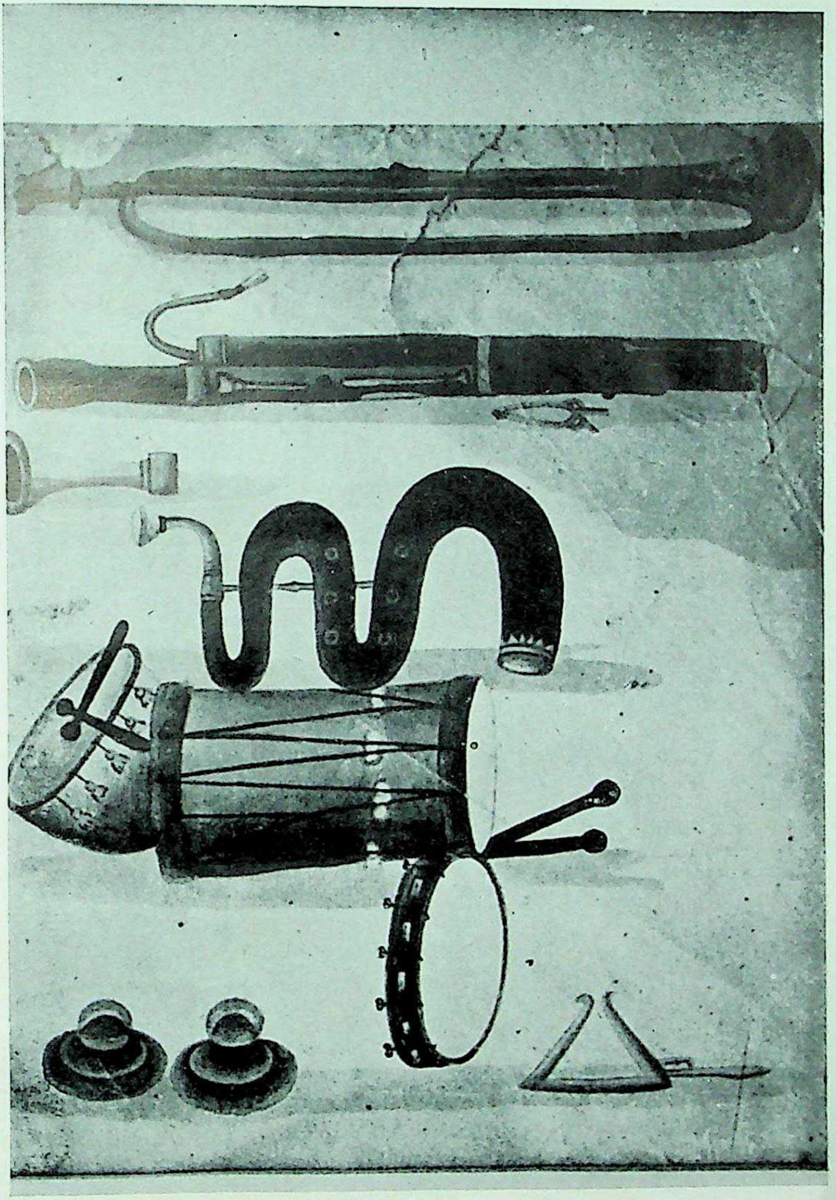
[1] T. G. P. Spear, *The Nabobs* (Oxford, 1932) pp. 180-81.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 85.



37. Bahadur Lal II (*c.*1850-1910). *Musical Instruments, c.*1880.

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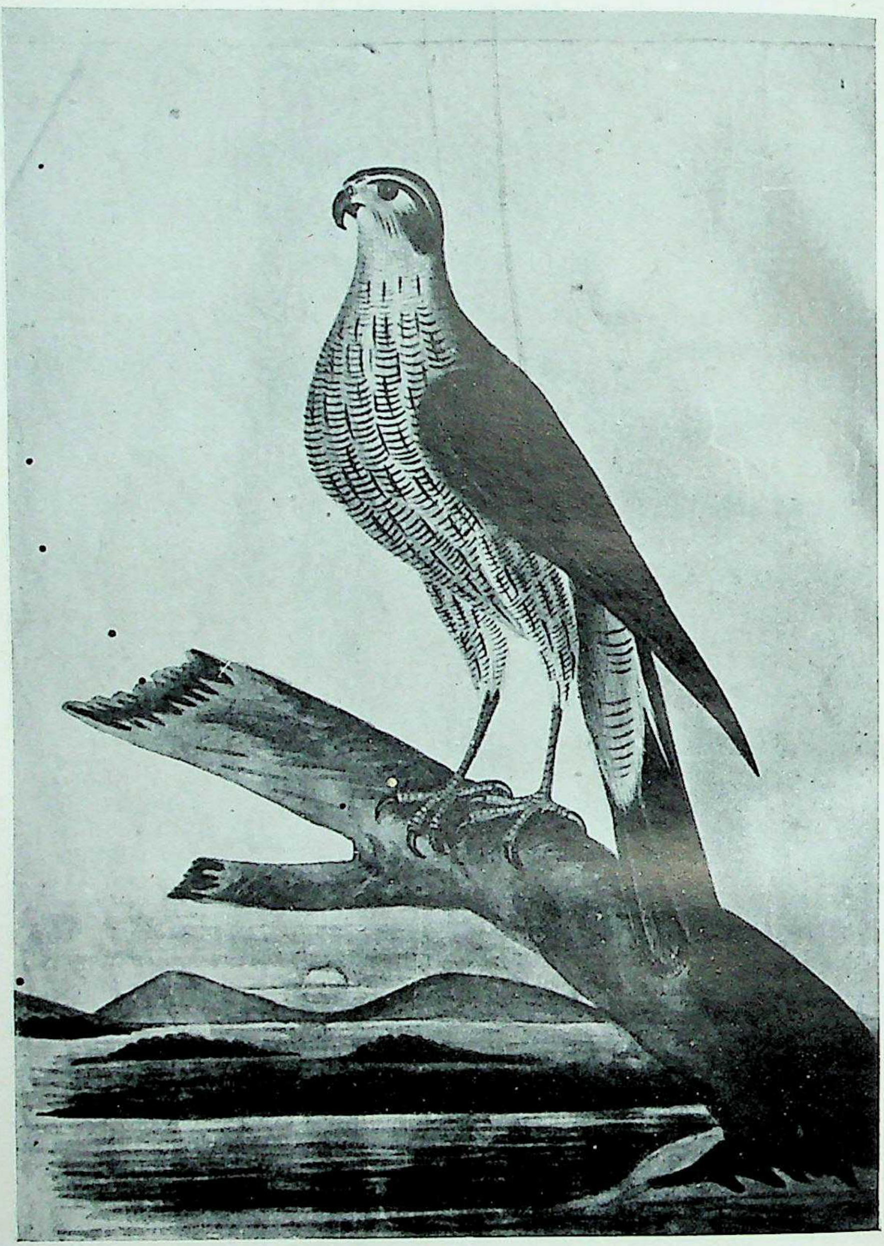
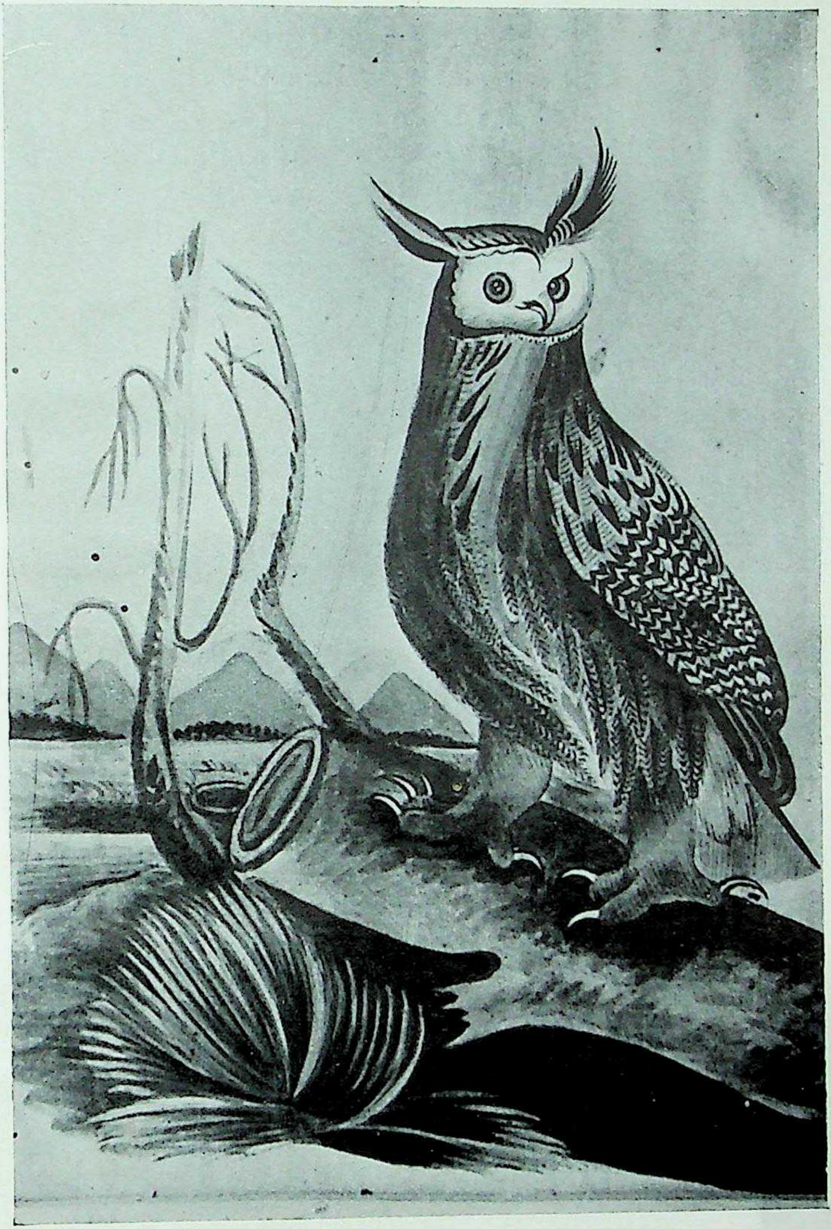
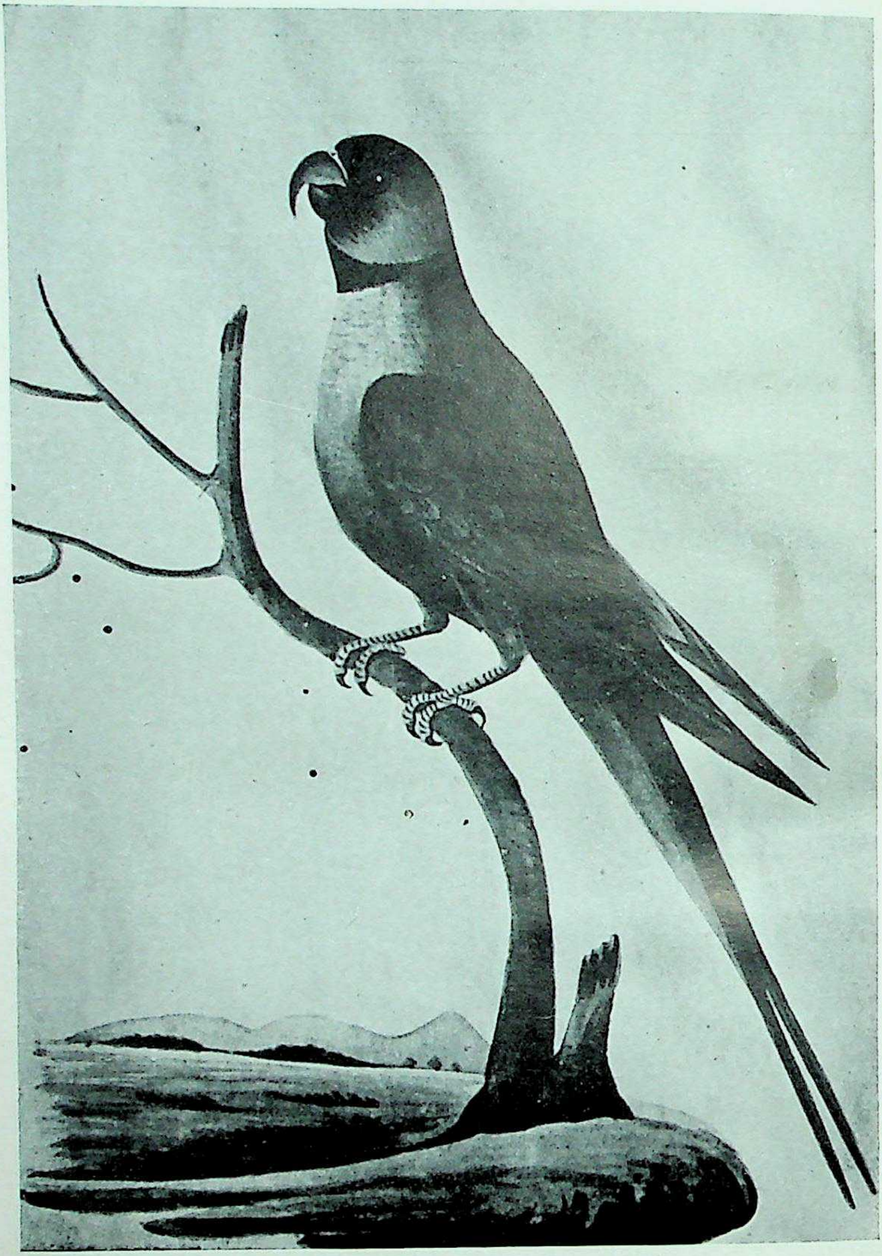


38. Bahadur Lal II (*c.*1850-1910). *Falcon* (*Baz*), *c.*1880.



39. Bahadur Lal II (*c.*1850-1910). *Tufted Owl, c.*1880.



40. BAHADUR LAL II (*c.*1850-1910). *Parrakeet* (*Kajla*), *c.*1880.

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most nabobs retired as soon as they had made their fortune, meant that most people furnished their houses with relatively cheap prints and engravings. Between 1710 and 1850 copper engravings, lithographs and aquatints were the most popular form of reproduction, while during the latter half of the eighteenth century the mezzotint had had a certain vogue. In contemporary prints such as the *Nabob at Home*[1] a sporting print can be seen on the wall, while the popularity of D'Oyly's lithographs shows that the lithograph was also a common form of reproduction, the use of a greasy crayon on a grained stone being the usual method (Plate 48). From about 1795 onwards there was a vogue for aquatints of Indian scenes in both England and India. Thomas Daniell[2] and his nephew William Daniell,[3] who came to India in 1784, began this fashion with their *Views of Calcutta*, *Oriental Scenery* and *Excavations at Ellora*, which were published between 1795 and 1828. Thomas Daniell also produced a series of engravings from James Wales' paintings of Bombay and Ellora made in 1791 and 1792. It is obvious that these prints had a large sale, for Daniell made so much money that he was able to retire to Kensington on ample means. These reproductions must have been in many homes. At the sale of General Martin's effects there were a number of Daniell prints,[4] and even to-day they are found scattered throughout India.

These prints, whether of landscapes, documentary or sporting subjects, were far less photographic than the portraits. They are vigorous and alive and carefully composed. They are all relatively small in size and the subject is so arranged as to fill the picture space as a decorative whole. Because of the technique, the pictures rely chiefly on their line and the flat washes of colour filling the spaces. Light and shade in an engraving or lithograph can only be shown by minute lines or by a stippled effect. The outline is usually black or brown and the colour scheme, in order to reduce the number of lithograph stones or plates, is usually very limited. Olive green, sepia, indigo blue, a dull rich red, are the predominant colours. There were various contemporary stock idioms which are found in nearly all the prints: the bunchy green foliage of the trees lit with a golden glow, the wispy white clouds in a dull blue sky, the solitary figure set against a low horizon, the three-quarter face with the sidelong glance.

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[1] Sir C. D'Oyly, *The European in India* (London, 1813).

[2] 1749-1840.

[3] 1769-1837.

[4] T. G. P. Spear, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

The style of the Patna paintings arises from a fusion of these two influences.

The Patna painters to the very end retained certain Mughal characteristics. They adhered to the miniature tradition and never ventured to experiment with canvas or oils or to paint large-scale pictures. The subject-matter remained much the same. They continued to paint flowers and birds, " type " portraits and scenes such as weddings and processions. Novelties, like the pictures on mica, were a relic of Murshidabad days. The workers were still organised on indigenous lines, and although some independent work was done, the bulk of it was produced by groups of artists working together to produce a certain type of picture. No painter strove like a French impressionist of the same period to produce a picture expressive of his temperament or his attitude to life. The artist's outlook was still that of the Mughal painter, who regarded himself as a craftsman working for a patron whose desires were clearly known.

In the Patna paintings delicacy of line is still important. Some of the best pictures, such as the *Sweeper with Dogs*

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(Plate 11), retain much of the lithe grace of a Mughal portrait. Some of the birds and flowers, such as the *Spotted Owlet* (Plate 33) and the *Stock* (Plate 41), are painted with a sensitive minuteness. Moreover, in certain pictures the line is used as in Mughal painting to circumscribe regions of colour and link them in a single organic pattern. Some of the flowers (Plate 43) and birds (Plate 39) have the decorative quality of a Mughal painting, and the Mansur paintings of Red Flowers[1] the Turkey Cock,[2] the Saras[3] or Manohar's Black Buck[4] or the Dara Shikoh album jonquil,[5] if deprived of their elaborate borders, are merely more complex cousins of the Patna paintings.

Although the Patna artists often made use of scientific perspective and, as Hulas Lal's sketch-book shows, knew all about it, they only use it when it contributes to the geometric pattern of the picture. At other times they distort as they like to satisfy the picture's design. The pedlar's mat (Plate 1), the spinning wheel (Plate 17), the pictures on the wall (Plate 20), the mats (Plates 21 and 22), have all been intentionally distorted to suit the needs of an angular pattern. Moreover, in Patna paintings the volumes are often sharply stressed, and every object, in true Mughal style, is precisely placed to form a pattern and yet at the same time to suggest three dimensions. In Shiva Lal's picture of the *Muslim Wedding* the women and vessels are meticulously placed to form a subtle composition. In Hulas Lal's *Women Carousing* the carafes, wine-glasses and *pan*[6] are all of significance for the design of the picture. Throughout Indian painting there has been this ability to fuse isolated objects into a pattern, and the Patna artists, as Plates 1, 3, 30 and 46 show, have not lost that power.

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[1] N. C. Mehta, *Studies in Indian Painting* (Bombay, 1926), Plate 31. Also see Plates 32, 33, 34.

[2] E. B. Havell, *Indian Sculpture and Painting* (London, 1908), Plate LX.

[3] *Ibid.*, Plate LXI.

[4] *Ibid.*, Plate LXII.

[5] Percy Brown, *op. cit.*, Plate 22.

[6] *Pan.* The folded leaf of the betel vine, stuffed with lime and areca nut and fastened with a clove. A delicacy for chewing.

It seems, in fact, that wherever in India the old artists came in contact with Western influences they retained these characteristics. Charles Gold, referring to a picture of a group of beggars, says: "The Moochys, or Artists of India, usually paint in the style represented in the present drawing, but in body colour, and sometimes finish their pictures in the delicate and laboured manner of a miniature; though they at the same time are entirely devoid of truth in colouring and perspective, and constantly err on the side of ornament and gaudiness of dress; excepting where the subject does not admit of such finery and decoration, as with the beggars; and then they possess considerable merit as to costume and character."[1] If Charles Gold's prejudices are discounted, it is clear that in Tanjore he had noticed the same delicacy of line and love of pattern which characterise the Patna paintings.

The European influences were often diametrically opposed to the Mughal influence, and the Patna artist only accepted that part of European art which could be reconciled with his predilections. Naturally only the small-sized European picture interested the artists. The large oil paintings meant nothing to them, but the miniature portrait and the engravings had a far-reaching influence, for their technique was such that they could easily be imitated by the Indian artist.

The new contact led to an extension of subject-matter. The artists now took to painting portraits, even of women, from life. Since the technique of painting on ivory could easily be learnt by them, the Patna painters could compete with European artists and mimic a European

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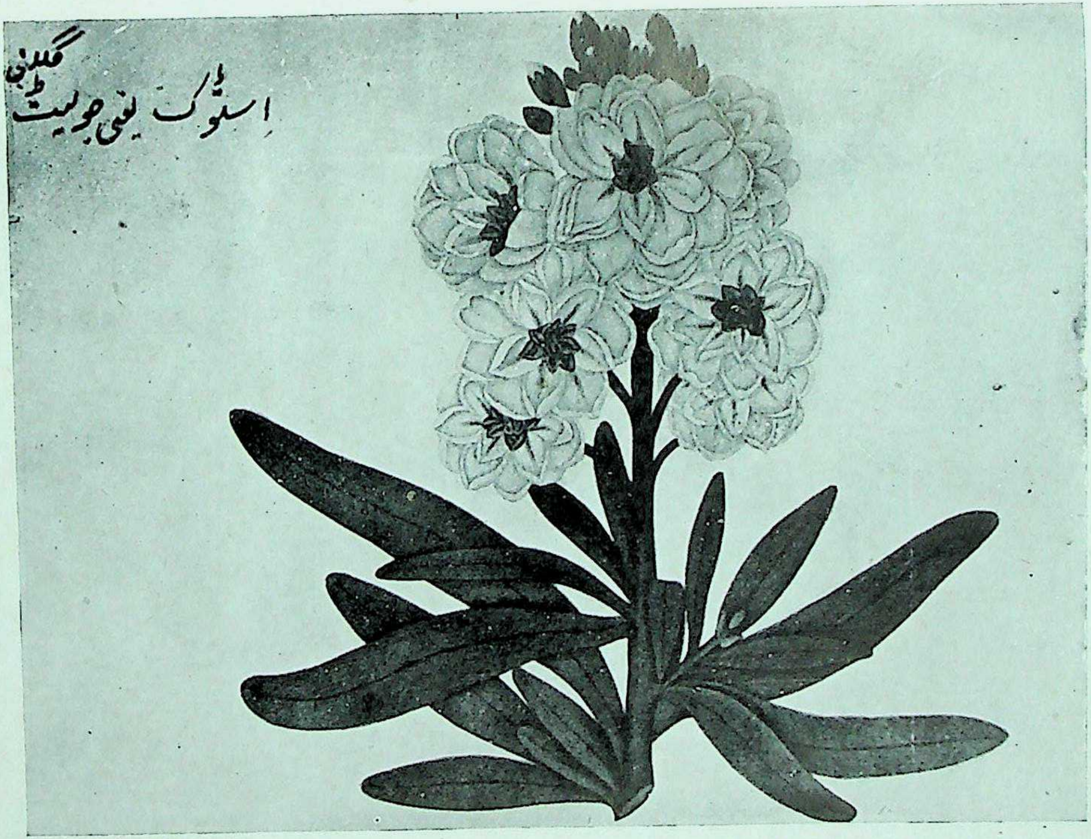
[1] Charles Gold, *op. cit.*, A Lame Beggar.



41. Bahadur Lal II (*c.*1850-1910). *Stock*, *c.*1890.

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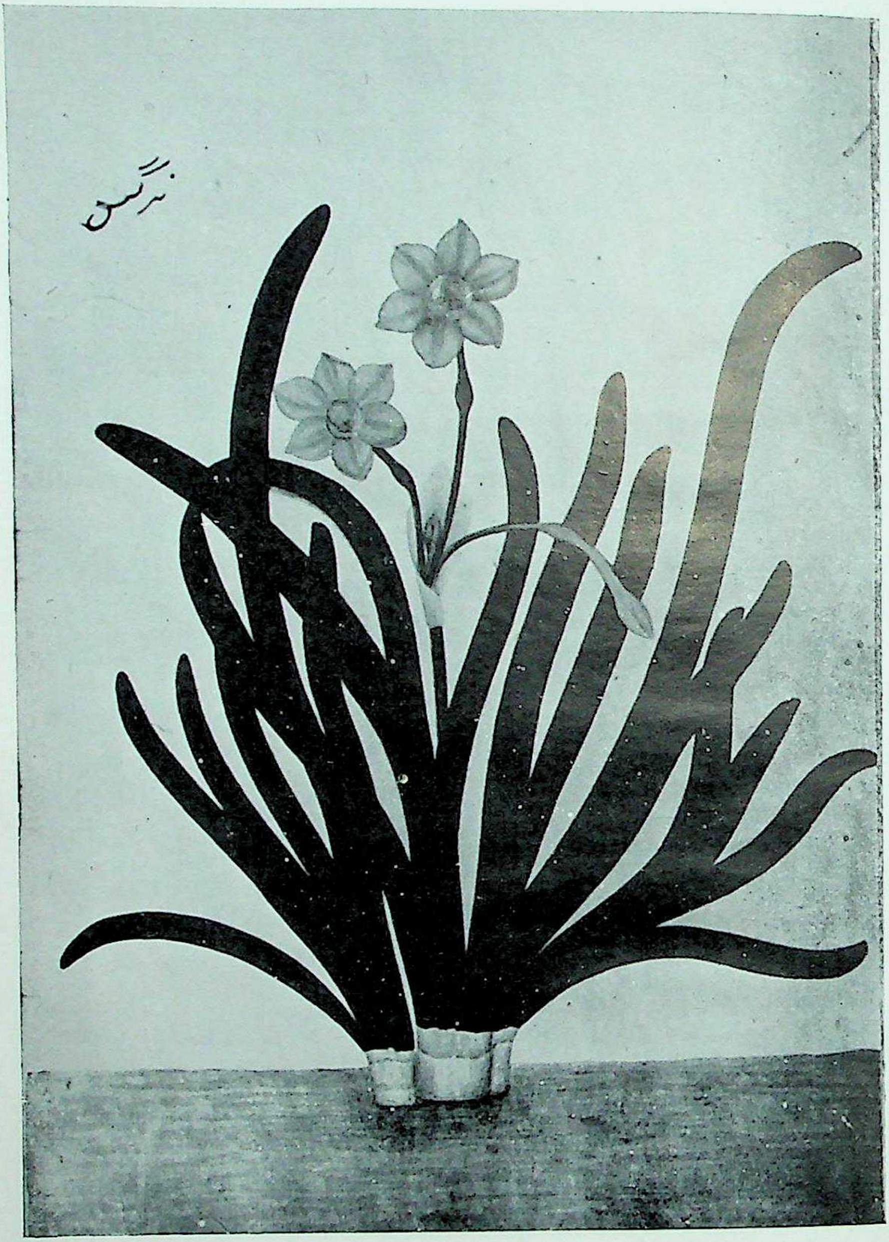
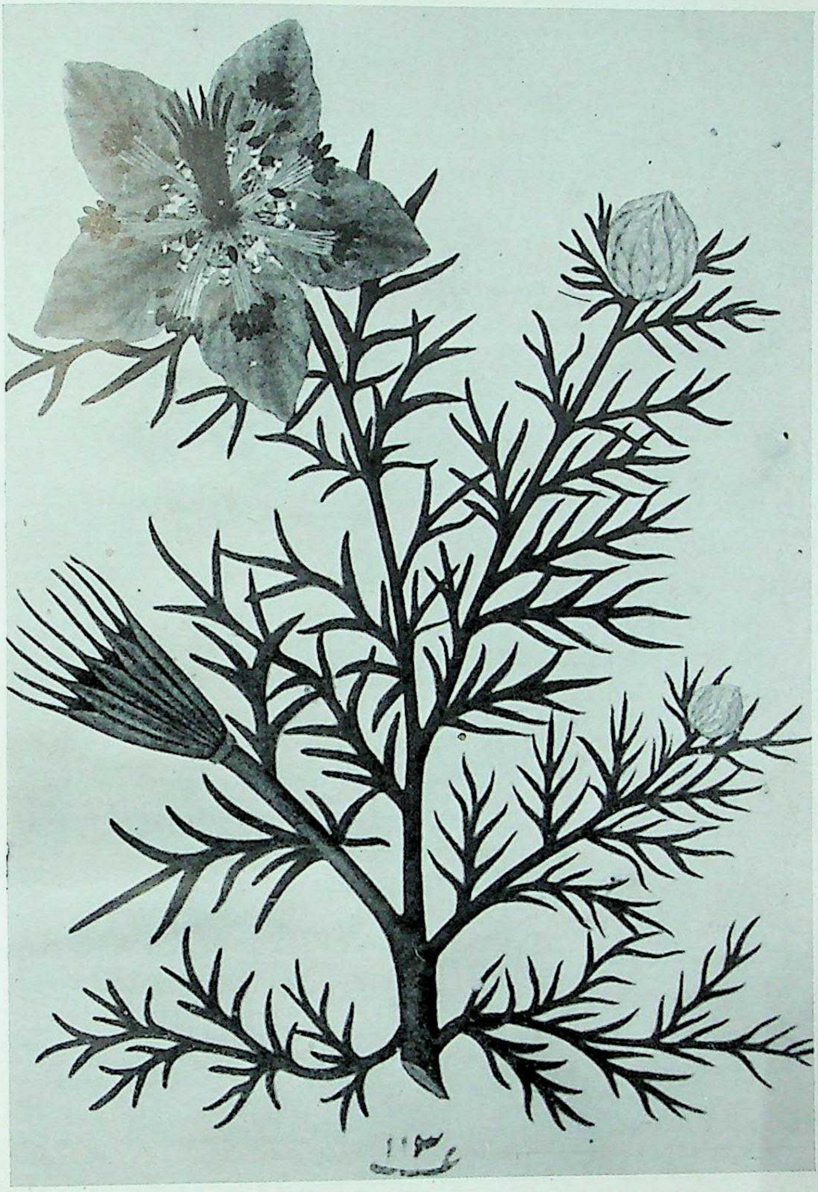
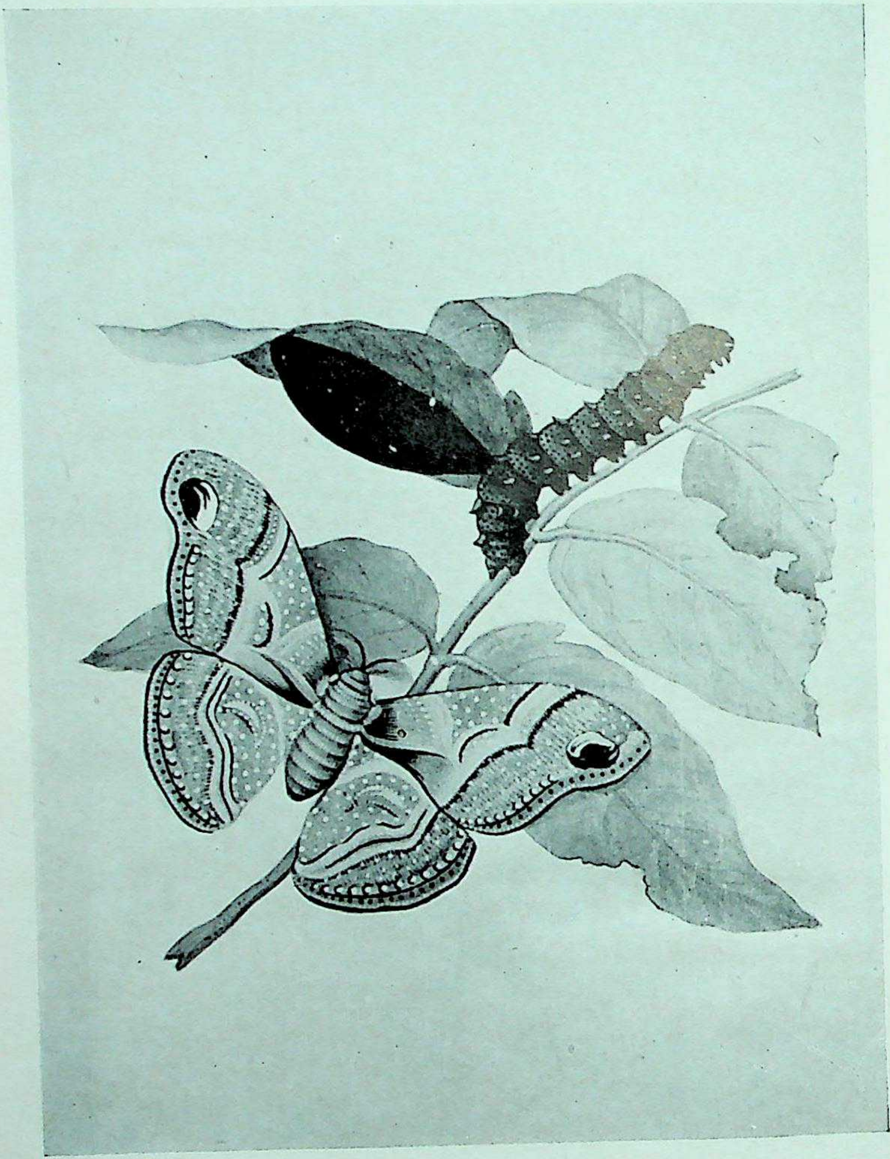


42. Bahadur Lal II (*c*.1850-1910). *Narcissus*, *c*.1890.



43. Bahadur Lal II (*c.*1850-1910). *Flower, c.*1890.



44. BAHADUR LAL II (*c.*1850-1910). *Caterpillar, Chrysalis and Moth, c.*1890.

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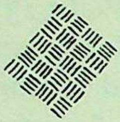
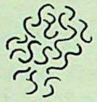
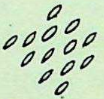
miniature so cleverly that the two can scarcely be distinguished. The lady in the Patna Museum (Plate 13) might have been painted by a professional European artist. The subject-matter was further extended by the European demand for documentary pictures of castes and costumes. It is here that the English sporting print or landscape had its influence. The colour scheme was fundamentally changed. The glowing Mughal colours gave place to the fashionable sombre hues of the print when the picture was intended for a European market. The colour scheme of the *Sweeper with Dogs* (Plate 11), with the sombre brown and indigo landscape and the touches of dark brown and bright blue, is English rather than Indian in its range. Similarly, the picture of the *Basket-makers* (Plate 30), with the dull green leaves catching the sunset glow, the fawn and brown thatch and ground, the dull brown skin enlivened by the blue turban and sari, is identical with that of many sporting prints. Even the lighter range of many of Bani Lal's paintings, with their pink and yellow (Plate 28), is reminiscent of the English costume prints of the period.

Another development was in the shading of solid forms. In the early pictures (Plates 1-11) the old Mughal technique of showing shadow by minute stippling (*pardaj*) or darker tones of the same colour is given up, and shadow is shown with soft washes of colour, as in an English water-colour.

Later, however, from 1850 onwards, especially in Shiva Lal's workshop, there is a return to stippling of a coarser kind. This, oddly enough, gave much the same effect as the stippling of a lithograph or the minute parallel lines of a burin in a copper engraving, and one wonders if this development was not a conscious attempt to give the effect of a print. In Mughal times the

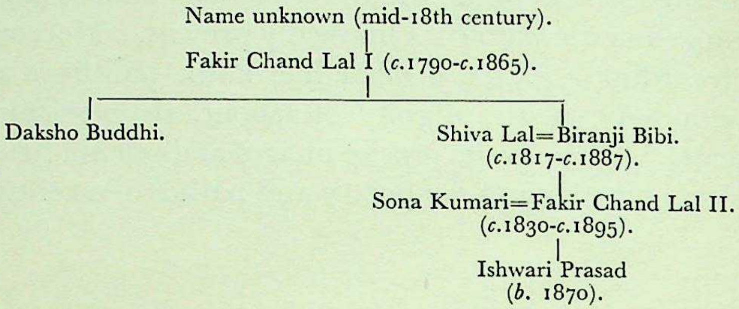
Patna artists used the *Chataiyal* style of stippling . Later, in Murshidabad they had used *Dimki* , but now in Patna they used *Java stippling* (like barley grains) . It is this which gives the effect of a print. It can be clearly seen in the picture of *The Day's Provisions* (Plate 26) and the *Basket-makers* (Plate 30). Moreover, many other English idioms crept in. The wispy clouds are there (Plates 21, 29) and the bunchy trees (Plates 29, 30, 31, 34), and there is the three-quarter face and sidelong glance so often found in the English print (Plates 21, 25, 29). The poising of a figure against a low horizon was a Mughal idiom, but in *The Day's Provisions* the effect is the same as that in many English costume prints.

The upshot of this fusion of two influences was a school of painting which, although in no sense major or of great æsthetic importance, is none the less authentic and distinct. The great majority of the paintings were essentially the work of a "bazaar" school, and in the process of popularisation much of the early Mughal finesse and complexity was lost. If Patna paintings have sometimes a flowing line and brilliance of colour, they are usually wanting in the subtlety and richness of the best Mughal work. Nor, on the other hand, did the Patna painters ever absorb the best of European painting. They merely came in contact with a minor branch of it, and the vigour, freedom and strength of the best Western painting was never acquired. But when the profit and loss has been estimated there is something left. The studies of birds, animals and flowers show a marked sensitivity to texture and bodily structure, and the studies of birds in particular have often an original and organic rhythm. In the scenes of contemporary life a geometric pattern is markedly present. Moreover, in recording a phase of Bihar life, Patna paintings also give a sense of the dignity of labour, its mechanical serenity. Their grave precise images and solemn figures convey something of the poetry and pathos of a century.

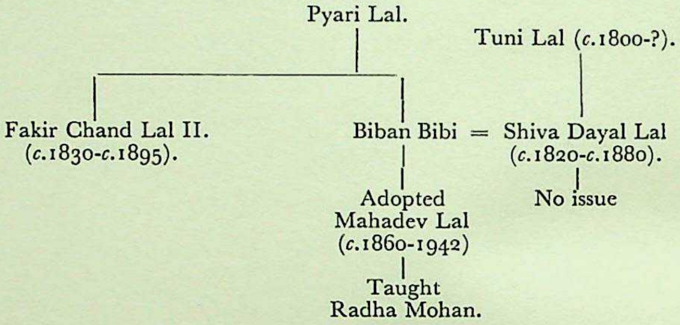
APPENDIX I

GENEALOGICAL TABLE OF THE PATNA PAINTERS

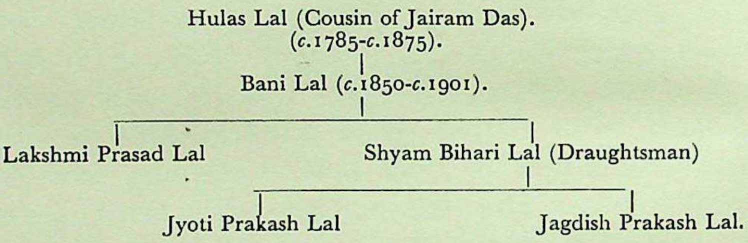
I


Name unknown (mid-18th century).
Fakir Chand Lal I (c.1790-c.1865).
Daksho Buddhi.
Shiva Lal=Biranji Bibi.
(c.1817-c.1887).
Sona Kumari=Fakir Chand Lal II.
(c.1830-c.1895).
Ishwari Prasad
(b. 1870).

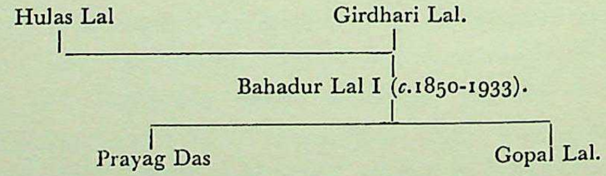
II.

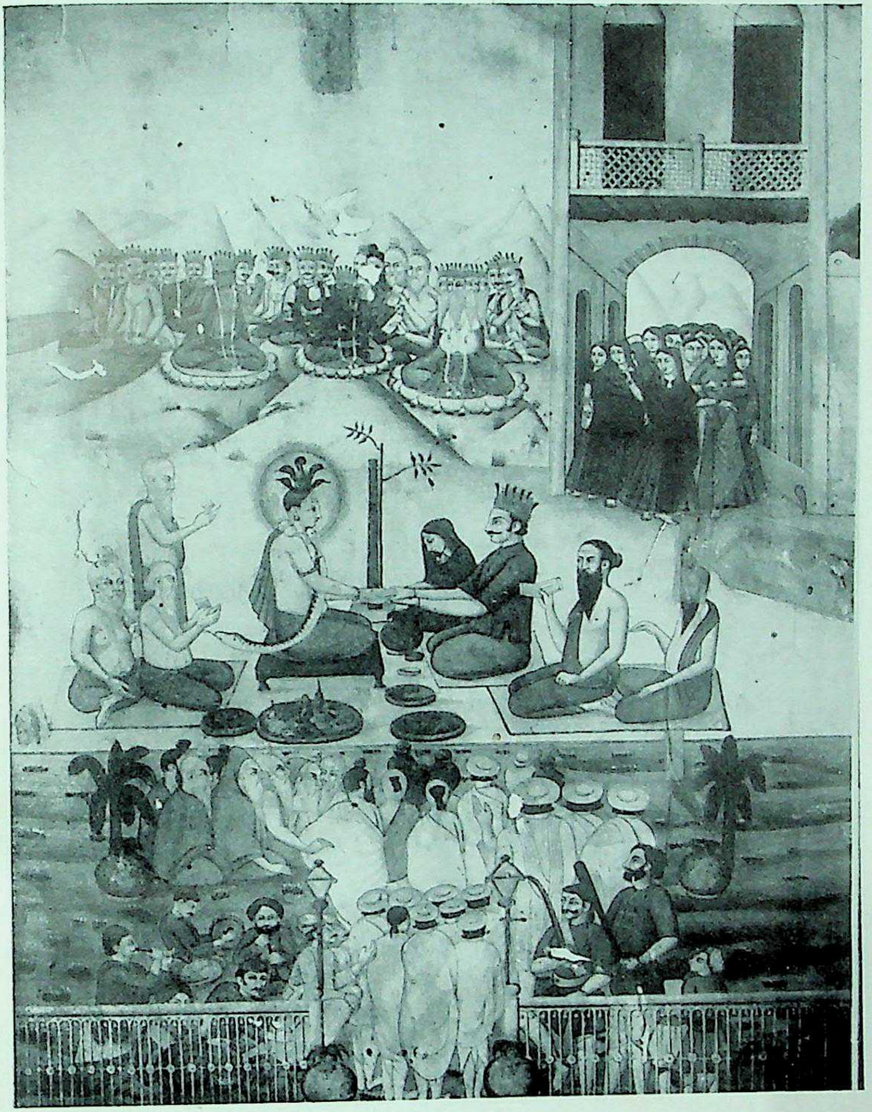

Pyari Lal.
Tuni Lal (c.1800-?).
Fakir Chand Lal II.
(c.1830-c.1895).
Biban Bibi = Shiva Dayal Lal
(c.1820-c.1880).
Adopted
Mahadev Lal
(c.1860-1942)
Taught
Radha Mohan.
No issue

III


Hulas Lal (Cousin of Jairam Das).
(c.1785-c.1875).
Bani Lal (c.1850-c.1901).
Lakshmi Prasad Lal
Shyam Bihari Lal (Draughtsman)
Jyoti Prakash Lal
Jagdish Prakash Lal.

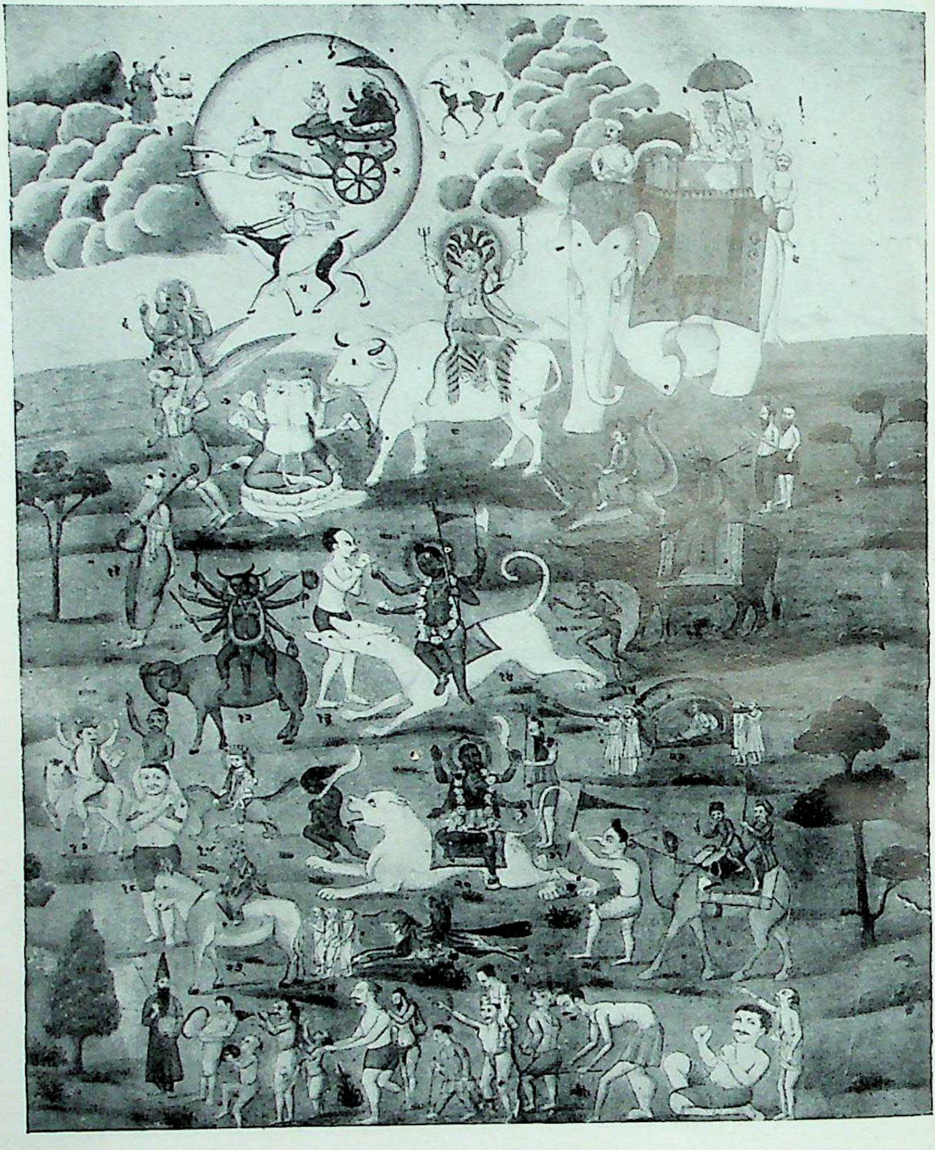
IV


Hulas Lal
Girdhari Lal.
Bahadur Lal I (c.1850-1933).
Prayag Das
Gopal Lal.

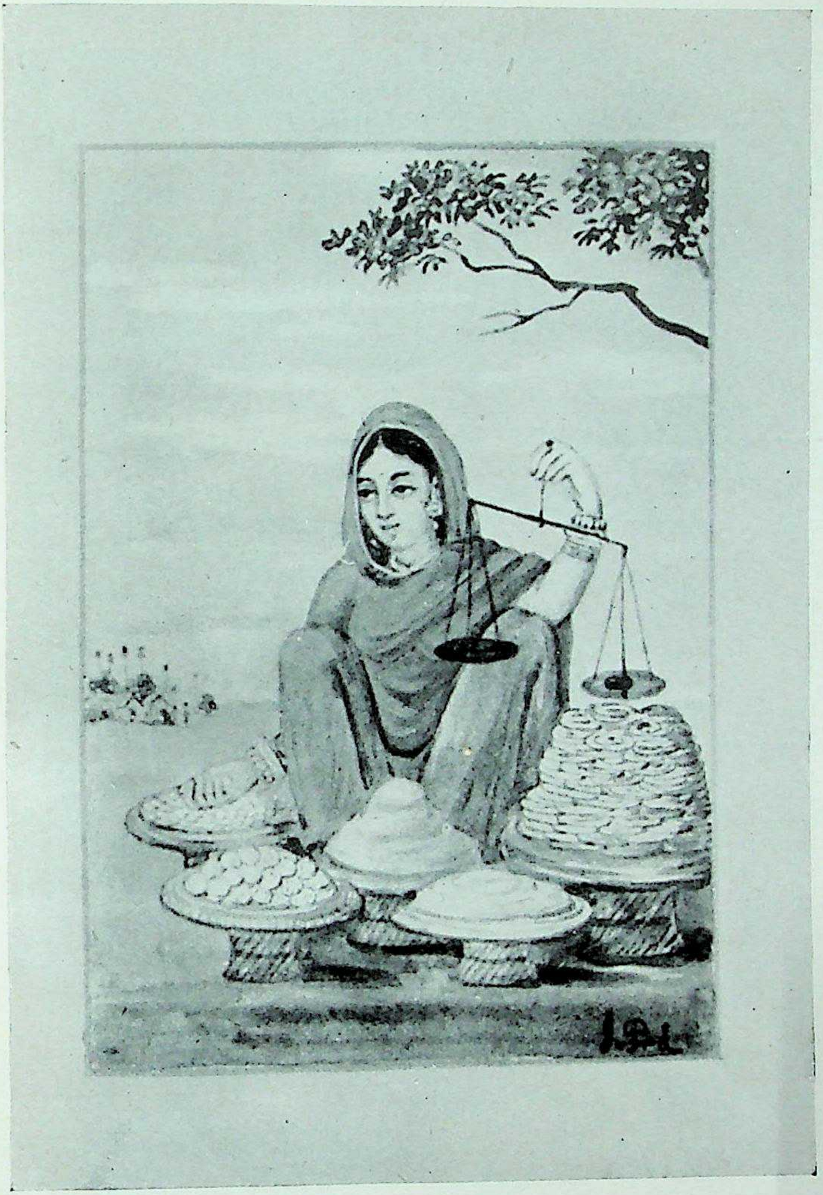


45. MAHADEV LAL (*c.*1860-1942). *The Kaniyadan Ceremony at the Marriage of Shiva and Parbati, c.*1900.

To face p. 44



46. MAHADEV LAL (*c.*1860-1942). *Marriage Procession of Shiva, c.*1900.



47. ISHWARI PRASAD (*b.*1870). *Sweetseller*, 1943.

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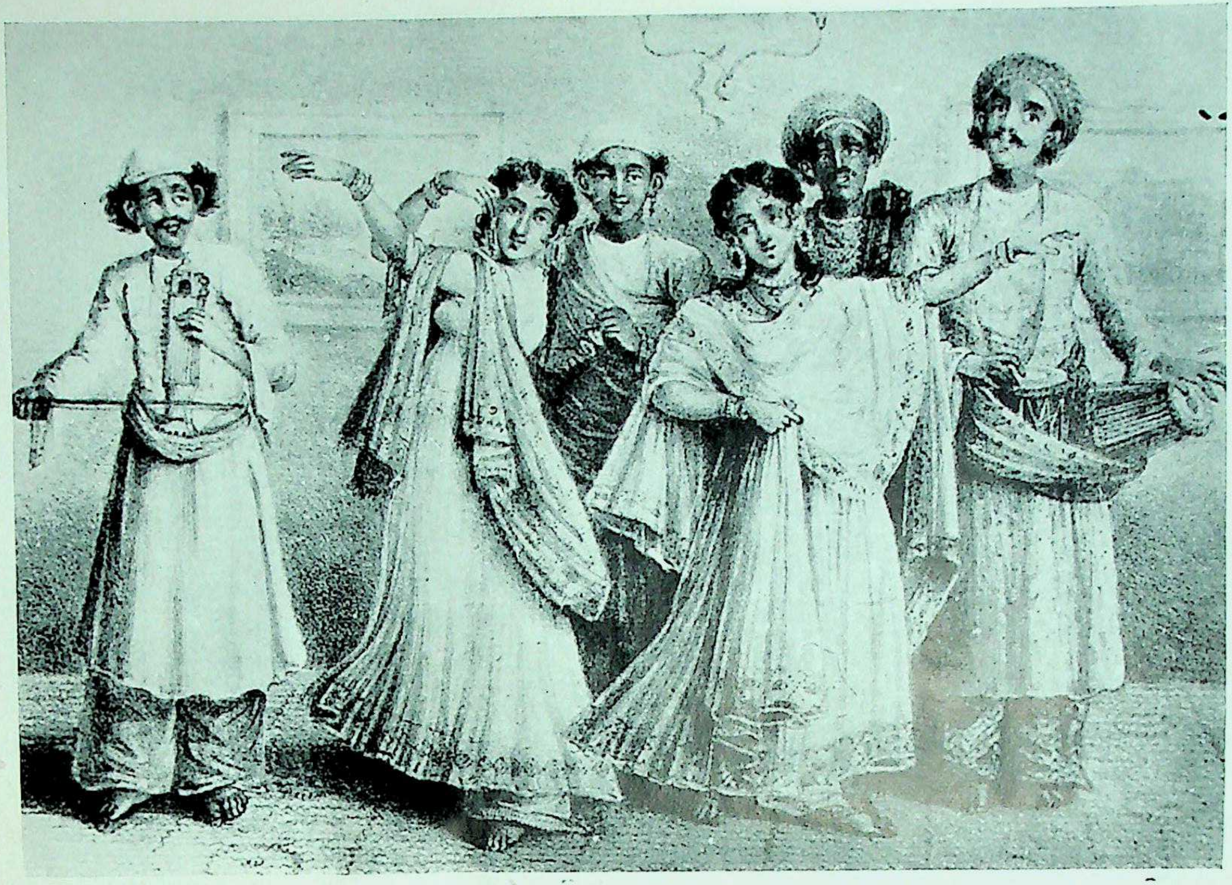

48. Sir Charles D'Oyly. *The Nautch.* (From "The Bihar Amateur Lithographic Scrapbook," 1828.)

APPENDIX II

LIST OF COLLECTIONS

1. P. C. Manuk, Esq., and Miss Gertrude Coles.
2. The Patna Museum.
3. Bharat Kala Bhawan, Benares.
4. Professor Ishwari Prasad.
5. Rai Sahib Balgovind Malaviya.
6. Radha Mohan, Esq., at the Patna School of Art.
7. Diwan Bahadur Radha Krishna Jalan.
8. Gopi Krishna Kanoria, Esq.
9. Rai Mathura Prasad.
10. Babu Shyam Bihari Lal.
11. Mr. and Mrs. W. G. Archer.
12. Manilal Nahar Collection, Calcutta.

APPENDIX III

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

(1) E. B. Havell, *Indian Sculpture and Painting* (London, 1908). Contains an outline of the history of painting in India, with a reproduction of a painting by Manohar. There is no reference to the Patna school of painting, but a reference is made to Kayasth painters in Murshidabad (p. 238, Plates LXIX and LXX).

(2) Percy Brown, *Indian Painting under the Mughals* (Oxford, 1924). A useful background for a study of Company Art. Contains references to the Patna school of painting on pp. 104, 178 and 193. Is incorrect in suggesting that the painters came direct from Delhi to Patna. The example of a Patna *qalam* picture given in Plate LXVIII is possibly of Patna ownership, but is not a painting of the Patna school.

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(3) N. C. Mehta, *Studies in Indian Painting* (Bombay, 1926). Contains a reproduction of *A Muslim Wedding* by Shiva Lal, together with a note based on some provisional remarks of Mr. Manuk before he had further investigated the history of the school.

(4) Percy Brown, *Indian Painting* (Calcutta, 1927). The best short survey of Indian painting in English. Contains passing references to the Patna school on pp. 52, 58, 62 and 86.

(5) Rai Krishna Das, *Bharat Ki Chitrakala* (Kashi, 1940). The best short account of Indian painting in Hindi. Its two pages (70-71) on the Patna school give the fullest account prior to Mr. Manuk's monograph. Regards the school from the standpoint of the parallel Benares school.

(6) P. C. Manuk, "The Patna School of Painting," *Journal of the Bihar Research Society*, vol. xxix., pp. 143-169. The first detailed account of the Patna school based on first-hand information from Professor Ishwari Prasad.

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